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Vol. XVI.

Published Every
Week.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,

98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y., October 4, 1882.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year.

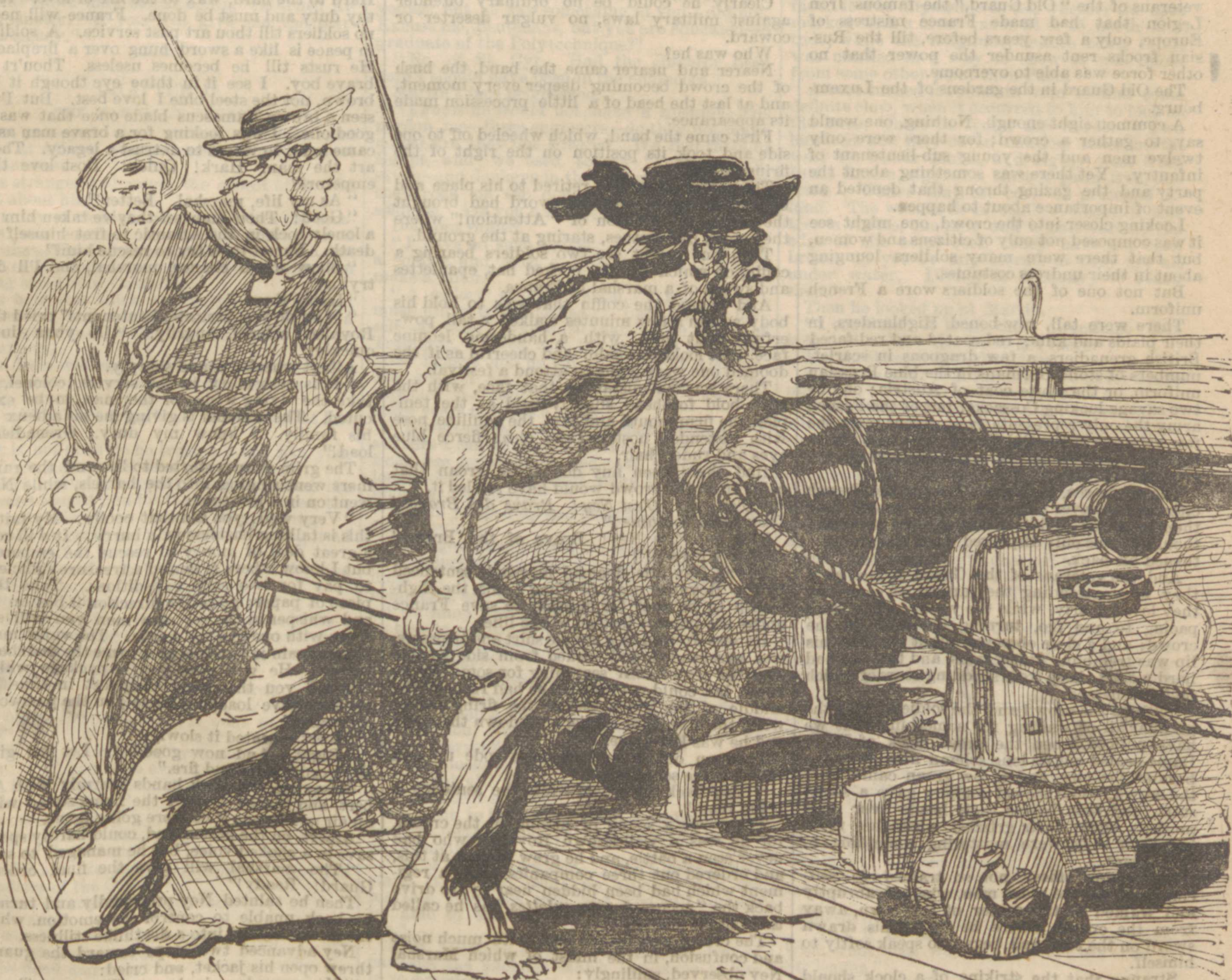
No. 206

ONE EYE, THE CANNONEER; or, Marshal Ney's Last Legacy.

A STORY OF THE EXILE OF ST. HELENA.

BY CAPTAIN FREDERICK WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "NEMO, KING OF THE TRAMPS," "RED RUDIGER," "THE RUSSIAN SPY," "THE RED RAJAH," "THE IRISH CAPTAIN,"
"DEATH'S HEAD CUIRASSIERS," "PHANTOM KNIGHTS," ETC., ETC.



"MONSIEUR SHALL SEE," RETURNED MARTIN. "MY LIFE AGAINST THE EMPEROR'S SAFETY, THIS SHOT SHALL SINK HER."

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OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE MARSHAL'S LAST ORDER.

In the garden of the Luxembourg Palace, in the year 1815, stood a little squad of soldiers, leaning on their muskets, waiting for orders.

Before them stretched a green lawn, shaven close, and around the lawn a dense throng of people, gazing curiously at the soldiers, and waiting for something. An air of silent expectation was visible on every face. The people in the crowd conversed in whispers, and one might see, every now and then, a handkerchief raised to a woman's eyes, as if the owner were weeping. One thing might also be noticed in the arrangement of crowd and soldiers.

In front of the squad of armed men was a clear lane that stretched up to a high wall, and this lane grew wider as it stretched further from the soldiers, while behind them the people pressed so close that a line of sentries had been established to keep them back.

The officer in charge of the squad was a young man, hardly more than a boy. Handsome and well made, with the stamp of education on every feature, the dark down on his upper lip could hardly be called, save by courtesy, a mustache, and the youthfulness of his face was emphasized by the fact that the soldiers of his command were all gray-headed men, with grizzled bristles on their lips, and the peculiar grim, set look of the veteran of many campaigns.

There they stood, in the uniforms that had made itself dreaded on every field in Europe for a generation. The tall bearskin shakos, dark blue coats, faced with red, wide blue trousers and white gaiters; one might know at a glance in those days that they were mostly veterans of the "Old Guard," the famous Iron Legion that had made France mistress of Europe, only a few years before, till the Russian frocks rent asunder the power that no other force was able to overcome.

The Old Guard in the gardens of the Luxembourg.

A common sight enough. Nothing, one would say, to gather a crowd; for there were only twelve men and the young sub-lieutenant of infantry. Yet there was something about the party and the gazing throng that denoted an event of importance about to happen.

Looking closer into the crowd, one might see it was composed not only of citizens and women, but that there were many soldiers lounging about in their undress costumes.

But not one of the soldiers wore a French uniform.

There were tall, raw-boned Highlanders, in their plaids and kilts; red-coated and red-faced British grenadiers, a few dragoons in scarlet, numbers of stolid Germans in the blue Prussian uniform, or the white coat of Austria; one or two savage-looking Cossacks; but of the French army the only representatives present were the few veterans of the Old Guard, who stood leaning on their muskets, gloomily eying the ground.

One might see, too, on the faces of the French citizens whenever a foreign soldier passed near them a scowl of bitter hatred and revenge, though it was only displayed when the stranger turned his back.

And the veterans of the Guard looked as if they were attending the funeral of some one they loved dearly, while the young officer kept pacing to and fro, turning his back on the crowd; and a close observer might see that his lip was trembling at intervals, and that he had hard work to keep from shedding tears of which he felt ashamed.

So stood the crowd and the soldiers, with the peculiar air of waiting for something that we have noticed, when the great clock of Notre Dame pealed out its long solemn note over the buzz of the city, and a low groan came from the crowd, while the old soldiers gave a slight start, and then bowed their heads over their muskets again, their grizzled mustaches moving as if they were muttering something to themselves.

The young officer, not so trained to self-command as the older men, wheeled abruptly and walked to the center of the lawn, away from the crowd, where he rested his drawn sword on the turf and began to speak softly to himself.

Strange that the striking of a clock should produce such an effect.

There, out in the crowd, women and men had gone down on their knees, the foreign soldiers alone standing up and looking amazed at the transformation, for every French person present was praying softly, half aloud, regardless

of prying eyes, as long as the strokes of the clock sounded.

One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine!

As the strokes went on the praying became louder, the soldiers of the Guard muttered more plainly, and one might hear the words:

"Dieu protege son ame! Bon Dieu, pardonne ses peches! Seigneur Dieu, recois son ame au ciel."

[God protect his soul! Good God pardon his sins! Lord God, receive his soul to heaven.]

TEN!

The sound of voices ceased as if by magic, and every head was bowed, as if the people were in church at the elevation of the host.

Then over the perfumed air of the garden came stealing the sound of mournful music, slow, solemn, but ineffably sweet, and even the German and British soldiers began to look uncomfortably round them and at each other as if they felt ashamed of standing up.

One old Highlander wiped the back of his hand over his eyes, and spoke in a low voice, heard distinctly for all that, over the crowd:

"Doon, laddies, doon. Dinna ye ken the puir mon's comin'?"

And without more ado he knelt down in the crowd, an example followed by the British soldiers with singular unanimity, till only the Germans, stolid and immovable, remained on their feet.

And then the music grew louder and more mournful, and one could plainly distinguish the regular beat of the muffled drums that mark the time of a funeral march.

The reason of the expectation was plain at last.

The armed veterans of the Old Guard were a firing party.

Some one was to be shot to death.

But who was the criminal, whose fate seemed to excite so much sorrow, for whose soul every one was praying so earnestly, even the very men who were to kill him?

The wild strains of the band came closer, and one might distinguish now the air of that grandest of all compositions in such a cause.

The band was playing Beethoven's "Funeral March of a Hero," never heard before that day, and composed for that man.

Clearly he could be no ordinary offender against military laws, no vulgar deserter or coward.

Who was he?

Nearer and nearer came the band, the hush of the crowd becoming deeper every moment, and at last the head of a little procession made its appearance.

First came the band, which wheeled off to one side and took its position on the right of the firing party.

The young officer had retired to his place and by a silent signal with his sword had brought the men to the position of "Attention!" where they stood like statues, staring at the ground.

Then one might see two soldiers bearing a coffin, on which lay the cocked hat, epaulettes and sword of a marshal of France.

And behind the coffin that was to hold his body within a few minutes walked a tall, powerfully-built man, with a handsome leonine face, that looked as calm and cheerful as if the doomed one were going to attend a festival.

There was no mistaking that face, with the high, bold forehead, slightly bald at the temples, the firm mouth and jaw, the aquiline nose with distended nostrils, the clear fierce blue eyes and ruddy hair.

Had there been any doubt, the groan that came from the crowd would have settled it.

"C'est lui! C'est Ney! Brave des Braves! Dieu sauve son ame!"

[Tis he! 'Tis Ney! Brave of the Braves! God save his soul!]

It was Ney, the doomed marshal, sentenced by the Royalist peers of King Louis the Eighteenth to be shot for fighting to save France under the tricolor instead of the lilies.

He was dressed in a simple shirt and trousers, was bareheaded, and looked from side to side over the crowd as if searching for some one he knew, but could not find, till he had reached the middle of the green before the firing party, when the attendant soldiers put down the coffin and he was left alone.

Then an officer on horseback rode up and called to the sentries:

"Keep back the crowd while the sentence is being read."

There was a sound of hissing in the crowd, for he was a well-known Royalist, who had never seen a battle, and he grew furious at this, and ordered out three companies from a regiment which had been hidden near by, to drive back the "accursed *sans-culottes*," as he called them in his pride.

The crowd was driven back with much noise and confusion, in the midst of which Marshal Ney observed, smilingly:

"You are too hard on the poor devils, marquis. They wish to take a last look at me. That's all."

The marquis sneered.

"The rabble don't deserve any decent treatment, marshal. They are only the Paris mob."

Then he beckoned to his adjutant.

"Read aloud the sentence!"

The adjutant read it, the condemned man listening with a scornful smile.

When it was over, the marquis, who was also a colonel, called up the young officer and said to him:

"You are Monsieur Albert Delmont, lieutenant of infantry, I presume?"

The young man bowed.

"Just graduated from St. Cyr? This is your first duty, is it not?"

"It is, colonel."

"Very well; see you do it properly, and I will mention your name to his majesty for promotion. You are about to rid France of a dangerous traitor, and the king will reward you for the deed."

He spoke in hearing of Ney, who stood by with folded arms, the same scornful smile on his face, watching both.

The young officer looked up at the colonel. His face had turned white and his eyes were blazing as he said:

"I beg you will do no such thing, colonel. I am doing my duty as a soldier, because it is a disgrace to disobey orders. But I have written out my resignation, to take effect to-morrow, when this duty is done. I cannot afford to remain in the French army with the knowledge that I have aided to rob it of the brave of braves. Have you any orders, sir?"

The colonel was so nonplused at this sudden ebullition of the quiet-looking boy that he could only ejaculate:

"None, none. Shoot him quick. That's all. Good-day."

And he wheeled his horse away, just as Ney burst into a laugh and cried out:

"By heavens, lieutenant, you are just the man I was looking for. Come here."

But the face of the youth had changed again to an expression of intense sorrow and shame as he said:

"Oh, monsieur le marechal, if I only thought it would not be cowardly, I would blow out my brains before you. My first duty to be this! It is too hard."

Ney laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and his fierce eyes softened as he said:

"My little boy, thou'rt a true French soldier. Hard to the hard, wax to the fire of love. It is thy duty and must be done. France will need no soldiers till thou art past service. A soldier in peace is like a sword hung over a fireplace. He rusts till he becomes useless. Thou'rt a brave boy. I see it in thine eye though it be brown, not the steel blue I love best. But I've seen a brown Damascus blade once that was a good one. I was looking for a brave man as I came here, to whom to intrust a legacy. Thou art the man. Hark! Quick! Dost love the emperor?"

"As my life, marshal. Better!"

"Good! Thou knowest they've taken him to a lonely rock in the Atlantic to fret himself to death. Darest thou try to rescue him?"

"Show me a chance, marshal, and I'll die trying."

"Listen then—"

"Why do you hesitate, lieutenant?" cried the Royalist colonel, angrily. "Do your duty quickly."

Albert wheeled round sharply.

"It is customary in the service, colonel, to take the dying wishes of the man to be executed. The marshal is giving me his adieux to his family. I know my duty. Grenadiers, load!"

The grim statues started to life and the rammers went ringing into the barrels, while Ney went on in a low tone:

"Very well; you did that coolly. My faith! this is talking business in a hurry. It will cost a great deal of money to rescue the emperor, but I know where is buried a treasure sufficient to pay for two such expeditions. Take this piece of paper; go to the direction it has on it, and whisper in the ear of a man you will see there with one eye the words: 'The violet may bloom again if you will give to me the marshal's legacy.' He will give you a package which will tell you the rest. Aha! just in time. I see they have loaded. Have you the password correctly?"

Albert repeated it slowly.

"Right. And now good-by. Let me give the word to aim and fire."

So saying, he shook hands warmly with Albert, and turned toward the firing squad with an air as calm as if he were going home.

Albert, on the other hand, could hardly speak save in a choked voice, but he managed to say:

"The marshal will give the final orders. Guard! Ready!"

Then he saluted Ney profoundly and turned his back, unable to control his emotion, while the crowd hushed into a deathlike stillness.

Ney advanced two steps toward the guard, threw open his jacket, and cried:

"My comrades, aim here! Fire on me!"

Twelve muskets came up to the level and flashed a broad sheet of flame, with a single report.

When the smoke cleared away, the dead body of the bravest man in France lay on the green

lawn, a smile on the face, the limbs decently composed as in sleep, and Colonel, the Marquis of Hauteville, cried out:

"So dies a traitor to France!"

Then, turning on young Albert with a sneer, he continued:

"You can save yourself the trouble of resignation. The Guard is to be disbanded to-morrow. We only saved them to do this little business for us, that no one might say Ney was shot by Royalists. Good-day!"

Then he rode away, while the crowd burst into the inclosure between the sentries, unimpeded by the soldiers, as soon as the colonel's back was turned, and began to weep and lament over the body, while they scattered flowers over the coffin.

As for Albert Delmont, he seemed to be unable to do anything but attend to his mechanical duties.

He led his men back to the barracks from which they had come, and entered his own quarters, where he found on the table a printed order disbanding the organization "known as the Old Guard of the Usurper, the men to be paid up to the date of the usurper's landing at Cannes only."

And disbanded they were, scattered to the four winds of heaven, as was fitting.

The soldiers that had fought under the eagles of Napoleon were too proud to march under the dunghill cock of the Bourbons. They would sooner scatter to the hamlets whence they had come in 1789, with nothing left of their years of glory but a memory.

But that very afternoon, before the sun had set, Albert Delmont took his way through the back slums of the Faubourg St. Antoine, through narrow, ill-smelling streets, where they had hung nobles from lanterns, twenty years before, and stopped at last at a corner where was written:

"RUE DES PIPOTS."

Up this dingy, ill-smelling lane he passed to No. 78, where he knocked at the door, which was opened to him by a tall, savage-looking man with one eye, who scowled and demanded:

"Well, popinjay officer, what is it? I am not in the service now. What is it?"

"The violet may bloom again," returned Albert, quietly, "if you will give me the marshal's legacy."

CHAPTER II.

THE MARSHAL'S LEGACY.

THE one-eyed man started violently and stared at Albert, who returned the compliment with interest.

The stranger had much the aspect of a wild beast about him.

In a day of close-shaven faces, when the mustache was confined to cavalry soldiers and veterans of the Old Guard, this man wore a full beard of enormous size, an appendage only seen among sappers or Cossacks.

His hair was thick and curly, but wild and untrimmed, and his fierce, dark eye had a wolfish glare in it, while his face was as dark as an Indian's.

His dress was only shirt and trousers, while his feet—very large ones—were bare, as were his big, muscular arms.

He eyed Albert from head to foot, and at last growled out:

"It is not possible he trusted a boy like you. Why, you have never seen a campaign."

Albert smiled tranquilly and repeated the password taught him by the marshal, when the other suddenly threw open the door, saying:

"Come in, come in. No need of telling it all to the street."

Albert entered a dark passage, when the man closed the door, and said gruffly:

"Go on. There's a door at the end."

They went on to a door, which opened into a small room looking out on a tiny paved court, where the bearded man pointed to a chair, observing:

"Sit there. I know the countersign; but I must be excused for suspicions, for the police are looking for me. What is your name, may I ask?"

"Tell me yours first," retorted the young officer. "If you were ever a soldier, you must know that officers do not submit to be questioned by strangers."

The other nodded.

"Right, lieutenant. My name is Jean Martin, of Rochefort."

"And I am Lieutenant Delmont, of the 17th Grenadiers of the Guard."

A scowl crossed the other's face.

"You are?"

"Yes. Now what have you to say to the dead marshal's message?"

"The dead marshal?"

"Yes."

"Is he dead then?"

"Certainly. I saw him shot."

The other glared wolfishly at him.

"Perhaps you helped shoot him. I saw your name in command of the firing squad, Monsieur Delmont."

The young man saw that the one-eyed man was laboring under strong but suppressed excitement, and he brought round his sword-hilt to the front, ere he answered slowly:

"The marshal himself gave the order to aim and fire, but I directed the pieces to be loaded. I was ordered to do it, and, as a soldier, I could not disobey."

The other kept his solitary eye glaring at him till he had finished.

Then Jean Martin drew a deep breath, and observed huskily:

"You are right. If man could have saved him, I could; but there was no time. It was fated."

He relapsed into a gloomy silence, broken by Delmont asking:

"Well, the marshal's message calls for you to give me something. What is it?"

Jean nodded.

"All right. I am coming to that. How did you get the password?"

"How could I get it? The marshal gave it to me, of course."

"When?"

"Just before he died. He asked me if I loved the emperor—"

"He did?"

Martin's solitary eye glowed like a coal.

"Well?"

"I told him yes."

"That was good. Well."

"He asked me if I would dare try to res—"

"Hush!"

One Eye leaped up and looked alarmed. He stole to the door, looked down the passage as if fearful some one would hear; then came back and peered out of the window.

Finally he came to Delmont and whispered:

"Pardon, my officer, but we must not say it aloud. He asked you if you would dare try a sail on the ocean across the line. Is it not so? You know he is there."

Delmont nodded.

"He did. I told him yes, and he gave me the word. Is that enough?"

Martin's manner changed to one of deep respect, as he said:

"I ask pardon, monsieur. I should have known he would not make a mistake. You are young; but he saw something in you I did not. Excuse me, lieutenant, but you are educated—a graduate of the Polytechnique?"

"No, of St. Cyr. Had the emperor been here I should have been in the engineers."

Martin's face brightened.

"I knew he would not make a mistake—but pardon me—these engineers—do they not make maps? are they not savans? We had them in Egypt, and we used to say 'Form square, savans and donkeys in the center.' You know they rode on the donkeys. They were not soldiers. Are you a savan, monsieur?"

Delmont smiled.

"I have no such claims. I was educated for a soldier, and, with a little trouble, I might make a sailor."

"A sailor?" echoed Martin. "But there I must differ from monsieur. I am a sailor myself—at least I was until that foolish affair of Trafalgar. I was with the emperor in Egypt, after Brueys got us cut to pieces at Aboukir. The general made us join the army and we thrashed the Bedouins finely. But I know it takes years to make a sailor."

"Nevertheless," said Delmont smiling, "I am sure I can do part of a sailor's duty already. I can use instruments and take latitudes and longitudes—an important thing for a sailor to know, as I've heard."

Martin jumped up and clapped his hands joyfully, crying:

"I might have known he knew his business. It was just such a man we needed, we old sea-dogs. It is settled. Monsieur will take the command, and we shall be happy to teach him all we know and obey his orders, if he will tell us how to get to the place we know of."

"But that is what I do not know."

"Monsieur?"

Martin's face lowered again.

"I know where the place is, and how to get there if I had a ship; but how to get the ship is the question, Martin. That is why I wish to see the marshal's legacy."

Martin looked relieved.

"Is that all? That is nothing. I will bring it to monsieur at once."

He went to the wall, opened a cupboard, and brought forth a small package which he handed to Delmont.

"It is there, monsieur. I don't quite understand it myself, being no scholar; but the marshal knew his men, and you will perhaps be able to see what it means better than me."

Then Delmont opened with a good deal of curiosity the package which had come to him in so singular a way.

It was composed of papers, one of them a map, and the first contained these words which he read aloud:

"The map herewith annexed shows the spot on which sixteen Spanish galleons and a number of caravels were sunk by their captains in order to avoid capture by the buccaneers. The island near

which they lie buried, is subject to extraordinary rises and fallings at uncertain intervals, and on two occasions the wrecks have been exposed to view for several weeks, but have never been reached on account of the absence of scientific men.

"The next rise ought to occur in the winter of 1815-16; and an expedition there will not fail to secure good results, as the estimated treasure, in gold alone, reaches a hundred million francs. The celebrated Mendoza diamond, said to be larger than the Pitt or Regent, is in one of the ships that carried the admiral. It is part of the present sent by the viceroy of Mexico to Philip III. of Spain, to stave off an impeachment. The poor viceroy, in losing the fleet, lost his head too. The island is so uncertain in its periods of rising that most navigators decry its existence, but the sea in its vicinity is generally marked dangerous, and avoided by careful mariners. It is part of the great Bahama Bank, and the spot was located at the time by the observations of the buccaneers."

"It was since rediscovered by accident, by Captain Philippe de Merincourt in the year 1799, during the American dispute, but the death of the captain rendered his further search impossible. He was able to carry away, from a single galleon, two or three hundred ingots of gold only, when a hurricane drove him off and he was killed in action with the British ship *Penelope* soon after. His papers came into my hands through my wife, who was the captain's sister, and she has never ceased since teasing me to turn sailor. If ever this fine structure of ours should topple, I may, but at present the emperor makes me rich enough."

MICHEL NEY.

"August, 1807."

"Eight years ago," mused Albert, "and he foresaw then the fall of the empire."

Martin grunted.

"Ay, ay, it was a fine time while it lasted; but France had to pay for it in the end. Well, my lieutenant?"

"Well, Martin?"

"Can you make it out?"

"What?"

"What it all means?"

"Why certainly. It seems the marshal has the secret of a sunken treasure in the sea, and has never used it."

"Ay, ay, but where?"

"Ah, that I don't know. It is not in the paper; it may be in the chart."

He looked carefully over the chart, which indicated part of the Bahama Bank; but the latitude and longitude marks were so old and faded it was impossible to tell whether the spot marked with a cross was in 24 or 25 north latitude, while the longitude, besides being faint, was marked in a way to show it was taken from some other point than Paris.

Albert turned it round in vain to find some definite clew, when it occurred to him to look at the back, where he found the words: "Two hundred and fifty-seven nautical miles northwest of Punta Mulas, and eighty west from Little Emma, sighted a blasted palm tree, due south. Under that the cove of principal island. The wrecks lie in shallow water, if this tree is visible, one mile and a half east at the edge of the coral reef. They have not been broken up yet by any storms as they are all under water. Diving is necessary to reach them."

Then he looked up at Martin.

"I could find it from those directions. But is that all? How are we to get there?"

Martin shrugged his shoulders.

"Let monsieur look further. He never made mistakes. There are other papers."

Then Albert turned to the other papers, all of which were recent in date, one of them written since the battle of Waterloo.

One of them was an order to "Bissot, Yvart et Compagnie," of Havre, to furnish Monsieur (name left blank) with the lugger *Creole* or the armed *chasse maree* *Dame de Secours*, as he should elect, with a full set of diving apparatus and the sum of twenty-five thousand francs in money, the same "to be charged to the account of what the firm will owe my estate if I die, as I apprehend, suddenly." This was signed by the marshal.

Another contained a full description of the Island of St. Helena with a map of the soundings round it, and detailed accounts of the easiest place for a secret landing. It concluded:

"The man to whom I intrust this has promised to do his utmost to rescue the emperor. If he finds we cannot succeed on the amount of money that he collects from Bissot, Yvart et Cie., then I authorize him to sail for the Lost Islands, but not till then. If he succeed in rescuing the emperor and landing him in America, he will make over to his majesty all the treasures to equip a fresh expedition to France. If, on the other hand, the emperor die in captivity, I have no further care for the treasure. My own family are amply provided for already, and need it not. Let him keep it. But if he misuse it or desert the emperor, I will not cease to haunt him and make his life miserable."

MICHEL NEY.

Martin nodded sagaciously.

"And if he says it he'll do it, lieutenant. Well, what shall we do? You are the chief of our league."

"What league?"

"The league of liberation. You think I am alone. Not a bit of it."

"How many are there?"

"Of us?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that's hard to tell."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, lieutenant, it depends on many things."

"What things?"

"Well, I'll tell you. You remember Leipsic and Montmirail."

Delmont sighed.

"Yes; I was in school then. How I wished they would let us out! But they would not."

"Well, do you know how many men the emperor got together then?"

"Not accurately."

"Less than fifty thousand men. Less than the old army of Italy. That was because he was getting beaten. But the Old Guard which came out there 8,000 strong or less, marched in at Waterloo with near 20,000. Give them time, and they'll come in, but they're all cowed now."

"I see. But how shall we collect them?"

"Easy enough."

"Well, but how?"

"Pass the word."

"To whom?"

"First to one, then the others. I have a little nucleus already. The rest will come. It will be easy now, they disband the Old Guard. The fools! The best soldiers we have had for twenty years. The pick of the armies that conquered Europe. Ay, ay. They can put their lilies and their fowls, but they can't make us forget the tricolor and the eagle."

And the veteran shook his fist and growled out savage French curses, till Delmont suddenly asked him:

"By the by, Martin, are you a sailor or a soldier now?"

"Neither, lieutenant, and both. I was a sailor till 1807, when I joined the army and made all my campaigns with them."

"Then I can use you for either."

"For anything, lieutenant, so it tend to the end we're after."

"Very good then. Are you alone here?"

"Not quite, lieutenant. No one is alone in the Faubourg St. Antoine. There are three other families in the house, but we are all of the right color, except one."

"And he?"

"Is a fool—a Jacobin—one of those that want back the republic. He'll do no harm. He'd rather have the emperor than a Bourbon, with all his pig-headedness."

"Very well. How do you propose to go to Havre, then?"

"I don't propose."

"How?"

"I mean unless you order me."

"Oh. I see."

"Yes, my officer. The marshal bid me strictly to obey any one who brought me the word to give up the legacy."

"Very well, Martin, then how are we going to get to Havre? I've no money till I send to my father in Grenoble."

Martin scratched his head.

"That's unlucky. Neither have I."

"But we must get there!"

"That's certain, lieutenant. The veterans of the Guard always obey orders."

"Ah, were you in the Guard?"

"Yes, lieutenant. Invalided since Waterloo. This eye, curse it for getting knocked out. But we must go. Let me think."

He cogitated awhile and finally cried:

"I have it."

"Well? What?"

"We must get to Havre."

"But how?"

"We are disbanded, lieutenant. What is to hinder you from selling those fine epaulettes and all that toggery, and coming out in plain clothes, while I sell all I've got?"

"That might be done."

"It will cost us to Havre, by diligence, twenty francs. If we walk, it will be only five, but we shall be three or four days on the road."

Delmont sighed.

"Time is not important, Martin. We have to look forward to a long fight, perhaps of several years."

"Very well then, my officer," said Martin, briskly. "The sooner we are on the road the sooner we shall begin it. Where shall I meet you to-morrow?"

"At the Luxembourg gardens, where he fell to-day, comrade."

"Why there?" asked Martin, shuddering slightly.

"To remind us of our mission, comrade. I am young and you are old. I need your advice many a time. You may find my knowledge also useful some time."

So they parted silently.

The next day, at the very hour when Marshal Ney had met his fate so bravely on the day before, two men, in the blue frocks of workmen, with heavy sticks in their hands, met by the grass plot where the execution had taken place; took one look at a dark spot in the grass, where the flies were still busy, and then clasped each other's hands, saying:

"Till life and death are one, we will go on and fulfill the marshal's legacy."

Then they turned and went away on the road to the mouth of the Seine, and Paris saw them no more.

CHAPTER III.

BISSOT, YVART & CO.

THE house of Bissot, Yvart & Co.—in other words, "et Cie."—occupied a dingy old house on the quay at Havre, facing on the port, which, like most French ports, is formed by two long jetties running out into the sea from the mouth of a river.

Before the house lay the outer basin of the harbor, into and out of which red-sailed luggers, fishing boats and *chasse mares* were constantly passing, in rigs that would look very singular to our eyes.

The luggers, with their big, oblong sails, can sail very fast, but have a clumsy appearance withal, on account of the habit of tarring or painting the sails, while the *chasse maree* is much like our three-masted schooner, save that it has a very short mizzen-mast.

There were very few square-rigged ships in the outer basin, and the house of Bissot, Yvart & Co. had no concern with them, having made its fortune, during the long war, principally by smuggling to the English coast, with a success and persistency that showed it must have had friends at court somewhere.

The paper blockades of England and the counter embargoes of the Emperor Napoleon had made smuggling so enormously profitable during the long war that it was calculated any firm could afford to have three cargoes captured by French or English cruisers, if a fourth could be run safely in, and the house of Bissot, Yvart & Co. had never lost a cargo.

How this happened it was hard to say. Every one in Havre winked when the fact was adverted to, and said:

"Oh, well, they have friends at court. They trade to Bordeaux, you know."

And it was a fact that the boats of Bissot, Yvart & Co. always cleared regularly for coast trade, and took cargoes of Lyons silks avowedly to Bordeaux, while they as regularly came back from Bordeaux with English prints and woollens, headed up in casks labeled "St. Julien," "St. Estephe," and so on.

Yet it was never known that the house of Bissot, Yvart & Co. sold a pint of wine in Havre, nor had a single cask left their house after once it came in.

But the house of Yvart & Co., which had a warehouse next door, did a large business in English goods, said to be derived from prizes condemned in court, and by some means both houses had acquired a standing in commerce which enabled the senior partners to live in Paris and speculate heavily in stocks.

Such open and impudent smuggling had led to the supposition that the house must have "friends at court," and this was the fact, the secret protectors in the case being several high officials of the empire, with whispers that the Empress Marie Louise was employed to coax the emperor to shut his eyes to what was going on.

At all events, the collapse of the empire changed the character of Bissot, Yvart & Co.'s trade, and they were now openly known as English traders, with a number of sharp vessels on hand, for sale cheap, their services being no longer required, inasmuch as they only held small cargoes and needed enormous profits to make them pay.

It was at a time when M. Adolphe Bissot, senior partner, had just come down from Paris, and was looking over the firm's books with an air of extreme content, as he examined the cash account, that a clerk came to him and said:

"Two men are waiting to see monsieur, who say they have an order from the late Duke of Elchingen."

Monsieur Bissot colored.

"Send them up," he said, hurriedly; "I wish to see them at once."

When the clerk had gone, the old man muttered anxiously:

"Too bad if the children have found those documents. I must buy them at any price. Here I've carried the load for ten years, reaped the profit, and now to be called a traitor to the emperor—I could not stand it. I should have to sell out and change my name."

Monsieur Bissot was not the first nor the last to find out that money may be gained at too dear a cost, if it involves discredit. He had made a fortune by trading with the enemies of France, and as long as France was triumphant no one minded it.

But now, in the hour of her distress, France loved the memory of Napoleon as nothing else, and M. Bissot knew that if he were accused openly by the heirs of the deceased marshal of having aided the enemies of France, he would be sure of social ostracism at the hands of people who wished to be blind, but could not remain so if the facts were published.

So Monsieur Bissot was exceedingly polite, and rubbed his hands with great courtesy, though his visitors seemed to be only two common workmen in blouses.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, "and what can I have the pleasure to do for you to-day?"

The men looked at each other, and the younger of the two said:

"First, we wish to be alone, where we are safe from listeners."

Bissot bowed nervously.

"Certainly. A wise measure."

He led the way to the rear of the shop, down a staircase into a cellar, and thence through a very small door into another cellar, observing: "Be kind enough to stoop, and look out for cobwebs. The passage has not been used for a long time."

Jean Martin, who followed next behind him, pinched Delmont's arm.

"I know the place," he whispered. "I was here ten years ago."

The old merchant led them on in the dark till he came to a small shaft that let down a ray of light into the cavern, when he said:

"No one can hear us or see us. Now, then, what is it? You come from—"

"The Prince of Moskwa," said Albert.

"Ay, yes. Marshal Ney, Duke of—"

"Elchingen," put in Martin. "I like that name best. I saw the battle."

"Well, then, what do you want?" asked the old man, nervously. "The duke was a good friend of mine, but we had no business relations—"

"Stop!"

It was Martin who growled this.

"I know better. I've been here before, Bissot. You've forgotten Jean Martin, that sailed the Dame du Secours. I know the old cellar well enough."

The old gentleman looked worried.

"What do you want?" he faltered, "to make money off my fears? You know that offenses against the empire are no crime now. You cannot hurt me—"

"Stop!"

This time it was Albert who spoke.

Bissot started and looked at him.

"Well, what do you want, then?"

"We have an order here from Marshal Ney. We are not seeking your secrets. The order calls for the lugger Creole or the *chasse maree* Dame du Secours, with a set of diving apparatus and five and twenty thousand francs in money, to be charged against any claims the marshal's estate has on your house. That's all. Do you accept the order?"

Old Bissot looked relieved.

"Is that all?"

"Certainly."

"You shall have it—but—"

"But what?"

"The claim—"

"Well?"

"Have you nothing to give me—no papers—no—"

"No what?"

"No agreement to give me?"

"None."

The old man looked still more worried, and finally turned to Martin.

"And you?"

"Well, what of me?"

"Have you nothing?"

"Of what sort?"

"To give to me if I honor the order."

"Oh yes—that is, the lieutenant has."

"The lieutenant?"

"Yes, my comrade here, Lieutenant Albert Delmont. He will give you the order."

"But is there nothing else?"

The old merchant was very earnest and anxious in his inquiry.

Jean Martin laughed slightly.

"There may be; but not now. Papers are easily burned, and I don't read very rapidly. Perhaps the children of Monsieur le Marechal have something you need. If so, I would advise you to see them. Poor creatures!"

But old Bissot seemed to be only half satisfied, for he said:

"But you witnessed one—"

"I did—ten years ago—here."

"Where is that paper?"

Martin smiled scornfully.

"Do you think I'm a fool? I did not need it to-day."

The old merchant wiped his forehead again and finally said:

"It might be worth your while—"

"What to do?" asked Jean, as the other stopped and looked hard at him.

"To—"

"I know what you mean—to sell it?"

"No—to find it."

"Very likely; but you remember that it does not belong to me, but to the marshal's children, who are young still."

Old Bissot sneered openly.

"I understand. You are bargaining. Well, how much?"

"For what?"

"For the original agreement."

Jean Martin burst out laughing and turned to Delmont.

"What think you, lieutenant? Here is a man trying to make me sell the bread of the marshal's children. Do you know what paper he wants?"

"No," said Albert, dryly.

"Well, it is the original agreement, made in 1805, whereby, in consideration of the protection of the marshal at court, with immunity from custom house detective work, this house agreed to pay the marshal the sum of a hundred

thousand francs a year, for ten years. The marshal never needed it, and has not drawn a sou."

Albert compressed his lips.

"What is that to us?" he asked, dryly. "We came here to do one thing. Let us keep to it."

Then he turned on Bissot.

"You have mistaken our mission, sir. We are not come to levy contributions on you, but to ask payment of an order. Do you consent to honor it?"

"Of course, of course," returned Bissot, nervously.

"Very good. Then the quicker we attend to it, the better. Let the marshal's heirs settle their own business. I wish only to attend to mine. Where are these vessels, named in the order?"

"Which are they?"

"The Creole and Dame de Secours."

"Both lying in the river basin, for sale; which will you take?"

"I don't know till I've seen them, and then shall depend a good deal on the advice of my comrade, who is an old sailor. I trust our business is over now, and we can return to the upper air again, Mr. Bissot."

"Certainly."

And the old merchant led the way back slowly, being uncertain in his own mind yet, as Jean Martin had intended he should be, whether the one-eyed veteran had the original agreement in his possession.

When they had returned to the counting-room, he said coaxingly to Albert:

"I suppose you'd like the money first. I have no objection to letting you have as much as a hundred thousand francs on your individual note, and promise never to press you for it, if—"

"If what?" asked Albert, so sternly that the old man stammered:

"Nothing, nothing; never mind. How will you have the money?"

"I don't want it till we've seen the vessels. Then I may take advantage of your offer, if I find I need the money. Please to send a man with us to the basin."

"I will go myself."

And the clerks gaped in wonder to see the head of the firm going out into the streets of Havre with two common workmen, treating them with as much politeness as if they had been princes.

But M. Bissot was too intent on saving part of the million francs he knew to be due to Marshal Ney's heirs to think of appearances, and he courteously led the strangers along the quay to a large dock, where lay a number of vessels, when he pointed out two, and said:

"The lugger on this side is the Creole. She measures three hundred tons, and used to carry a long thirty-two and some carronades—"

Jean interrupted him.

"Where are the guns?"

"In the hold. They are worthless now."

"How worthless? Burst?"

"No, no. They are good enough for that matter—good as new."

"Then why worthless?"

"Oh, who wants to buy guns now that the wars are over? They are only good for old bronze. That's all."

"What are the carronades?" asked Albert.

"Thirty-two-pounders, monsieur, if you want them, but surely—"

"We want them," said Albert, decidedly.

"And now for the other boat, the—what is her name?"

"The *Chasse Maree*. She is yonder by the stern of the Creole."

Albert looked at the two vessels without any technical skill, but for all that he could not help admiring them. They were both very low in the water, with sharp, snake-like hulls, and bulwarks unusually high and strong for such craft, as if meant to keep out a heavy sea.

They looked neglected and dirty, to be sure, but that could not hide the graceful lines of their hulls, and he turned to Jean.

"Which shall we take?"

Jean looked at them critically, then said to Bissot:

"How long has the Creole been built?"

Bissot sighed.

"Only two years. She cost a great deal, and has not paid for herself like the rest."

Jean grinned.

"You mean not over three times. That's understood. Well, I don't want the old Dame de Secours. She was old in 1805. How many knots can the Creole make, wing and wing?"

"I don't know. She was built by the famous Marcel, and was called the fastest lugger in the channel; but she'll never pay now."

"Why not?" asked Albert.

"Ah, my friend, you are not a sailor, I see. She was built to run laces and silks, where a hundred tons is a fortune. She measures three hundred, and does not stow over one hundred and twenty, after her stores are in, with the guns."

"How much with a full magazine?" asked Jean Martin, quickly.

Bissot looked round apprehensively.

"Not so loud. That's all past and gone."

"But how much?" persisted Jean.

The old merchant lowered his voice.

"I once sent her out with four hundred rounds on board, and thirty-five tons of laces, to England. She sunk a revenue cutter and I cleared nearly a million francs."

"But that's all over now," he added, with a sigh. "Ah, what times we had then. Now a bare fifty per cent. is all a man can expect, and these white coat royalist officers want thirty of that, to keep still."

"Even then," observed Albert, dryly, "twenty per cent. strikes me as good profit, on a mercantile adventure."

Bissot shrugged his shoulders.

"Pretty good, if only—"

"If what?"

"If one is not used to two hundred net, and five hundred on some classes of goods."

Then his hearers could not help smiling at his rueful face, and Jean Martin said, briskly:

"Come, come, we waste time. We will take the Creole, and we want her full and stored—you understand? We are going on a trip across the line, my friend, and need a new ship. How long before you will be ready to deliver her?"

Bissot hesitated.

"I can't get you a crew. You must take the responsibility. I shall sell her to you, and you will give a receipt in the name of the estate. She does not sail hence as *our* vessel."

Jean Martin laughed.

"What an old fox. We will kill two birds with one stone. Now I'll wager that he charges us enough for the Creole to make the estate claim look small."

Bissot chuckled.

"Of course, business is business. Your order reads to charge to the Ney account; but I'm not bound to take your price."

Jean Martin turned to Delmont.

"What say you, lieutenant? Shall we agree to this old cormorant's terms?"

"We will take the Creole," said Albert; "and if we find we can get another vessel as good, cheaper, then we will only receipt for the price we should justly pay."

Jean Martin nodded eagerly.

"That's right. These clippers are a drug on the market now. This one is not worth more than a hundred and eighty thousand francs, with her stores in."

Bissot held up his hands in horror.

"My dear sir, you are crazy! A half million would not buy her. You forget her model, her finishing. Eh, mon dieu, you wish to ruin me."

"Never mind what we wish," said Albert, quietly. "You will come to our terms or I shall be obliged to present the order to the chief of police, and—"

Bissot turned purple.

"My young friend, do not be rash. They would imprison you at once for a Bonapartist—"

"And you too, monsieur. You see we are desperate men, and have counted the cost. On the other hand, give us the ship at a fair valuation, and I will give you a receipt that will some day enable you to get the money back with interest, instead of losing it altogether."

Bissot looked doubtful.

"How?"

Albert whispered.

"In the name of the emperor. He will yet come back. You know if he keeps his word or not."

Bissot trembled all over.

"I'll do what you want," he said, huskily. "It shall never be said I deserted him in his need. You shall have all that you require, up to the full amount of the Ney claim."

Then he and Jean Martin fell to discussing the alterations and outfit needed for the vessel, and when they at last separated Martin said to Albert:

"The old man is not so bad after all. He will fit us for sea so we can go round the world. Now we must look up a crew."

"And where shall we find them, Jean?"

"Down in the fish town. I know the old sea wolves. We'll get men who will follow us to the pit."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LUGGER.

THREE weeks after the visit of the two workmen to the house of Bissot, Yvart & Co., a beautifully modeled lugger, painted white, with the head of a woman under the bowsprit, slipped out of the harbor between the long jetties, and found herself in a chopping sea, full of white caps.

As she passed out, an old *douanier* or customs officer, on the long pier, remarked:

"It must be a rich fellow owns that yacht, and one not afraid of telling his mind."

"Why so?" asked a brother officer.

"Why? Plain enough. Look at her head?"

"Well, what of it?"

"You see nothing then?"

"Nothing but a figure-head—a woman—some Fanchette or Marie—"

The other interrupted him.

"Is that all? You don't recognize the head?"

"No. How should I?"

"Well, take the glass there, and read the name."

The other took an observation.

"Well, she is called 'La Belle Creole;' but what of that?"

"Did you notice the head-dress?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"A crown of some sort."

"Well, don't you see?"

"No, on my honor."

The elder man looked at him dryly.

"Comrade, excuse me, but where were you born?"

"In Brittany of course."

"Ah, that accounts for it. You never saw the Empress Josephine. That is her head. She is la belle Creole, and that fellow is a rank Bonapartist, who is rich enough to laugh at the king."

The younger officer shook his fist at the lugger, saying vindictively:

"Ah, accursed spawn of the usurper! I'll watch for you when you come back, and lodge an information. We'll see if you'll flaunt your impious titles in the faces of the king's officers."

From which it may be judged that the young man was an ardent royalist, which was the case.

But inasmuch as the subject of his remarks was at sea, slipping through the short waves like a knife, he could not catch her, and he had to content himself with cursing, while La Belle Creole rapidly increased her distance from Havre.

She had only hoisted a jib and main lug-sail, to work out, yet she was passing the fishing boats, staggering under all sail, as if they had been anchored, and held her own with a large ship that had gone out before her under whole topsails and courses, not losing a foot after passing the Long Pier.

So evident indeed was her superiority, that a curious group of officers was gathered on the taffrail of this very ship, admiring her, and one of them said in English:

"By Jove, Tom, if I owned that hooker, I should be tempted to do something desperate with her. The old Penelope used to be counted as smart as any frigate in the service, but I believe that chap's actually overhauling us in our own wind."

This ship that went out before the Belle Creole was a British frigate, as was indicated by the trimness of her rig and general appearance.

She had just come out of the docking basin at Havre, where she had been laid up for repairs, being the first ship of her nationality that had entered a French port, save as enemy or prisoner, for a period of twenty years and more.

"I don't believe he can show us his stern in heavy work," replied another officer, thoughtfully; "but I must admit he sails pretty fast. What's that on the head, Charley Duncomb? You've got the glass."

Lieutenant Charles Duncomb took down his glass long enough to say:

"It's a head of that poor Empress Josey, the one Boney divorced, you know. The fellow must be a Bonapartist."

"Shouldn't wonder," returned Chumley, another Luff. "I think if I was a Frenchman I'd be a Bonapartist. Old Boney's a man, and that's more than one can say for that fat old humbug, Louis the Eighteenth. I swear, Charley, I wish the old sinner would get up another war on his own account. I'd like a chance to pepper them."

Just at that moment, while they were still looking at the lugger astern, and making bets on whether she would come up with them without making more sail, one of the officers coughed, and whispered:

"Look out. Skipper's coming."

Then they got off the taffrail in a hurry, and became very stiff and sober, as a tall, stern-faced man, with iron-gray whiskers, came up the companionway, and touched his hat in answer to the universal salutes.

It was the captain of the Penelope.

His entrance broke up the group at once, and he took the weather side of the quarter-deck mechanically, and began to pace up and down.

Captain Wright was known familiarly to the sailors as "Old Crabs," on account of his silent, surly ways and the sharp severity with which he dealt out justice on the Penelope to officer and man alike, if either neglected duty, while he had never been known to praise a living soul for anything.

Yet Captain Wright had only been in the service a single year as post-captain, though he had entered it as a midshipman thirty-five years before, and had fought in the action between Lord Howe and Count de Grasse in the West Indies, before the United States had become a nation in the eyes of Great Britain.

But that had been his solitary battle, and he had been in prison for twenty years in the midst of Paris, emerging thence at Napoleon's abdication, in 1814, a man of fifty, with a hatred of France and everything French, only equalled by his bitter detestation of the emperor himself.

"That man made me lose twenty years of my

life," he would say when he was drunk, but at no other time, "and curse him, I'll do all I can to poison what time he has left, if I can get the chance."

And therefore, it was that the Penelope was now going out on special duty, detested by every officer and man in the ship save one, and he was the captain, who had actually applied to be placed on this very duty.

The frigate, one of the smartest in the British navy, had been detailed, on the request of Captain Marcus Wright, to do guard duty at the Island of St. Helena, and examine all vessels coming within two degrees of latitude, to prevent any escape of the state prisoner confined there.

To some men, to most, a vexatious and tedious duty; to Wright, a mission of vengeance for the past, a promise of delight in torturing the proud captive.

The captain came on the quarter-deck, and actually smiled as he saw Havre receding in the distance. A smile was as rare on his sour face as snow in June or flowers in December.

Then the smile changed to a frown as he suddenly set eyes on the beautiful French lugger, skimming along in the wake of the frigate, less than a mile astern, under jib and mainsail alone.

He frowned because she was beautiful and yet unmistakably French. He hated to admire anything among his old foes.

He muttered a curse and resumed his walk; but every time he turned back his eye was attracted to the lugger, and at last he muttered to himself:

"By the living—yes—she is gaining on the Penelope, and holding our course."

And his course was straight out to sea, with a trend that would take him into the Atlantic.

But it was too early for the captain of the frigate to decide whether the pretty white yacht was holding his course, when there are only two ways out of Havre, up and down channel, till the chops are reached.

Captain Wright scowled at the lugger in a generally vindictive way, and then snarled out:

"Curse the French jade! Here, younker!"

The midshipman of the watch came up in a hurry, for aboard the Penelope it was a jumping matter when the cross captain spoke.

"The glass."

In a moment it was unslung and set to the exact focus used by the captain, and known by the boy from long experience.

"Here, sir."

The captain stared at the lugger long and steadily through it.

Through the glass, one could hardly see which was lugger, which foam, on account of the white hull; and it was only by glimpses that he could make out all the details of her bow.

Then his face contracted into a scowl of deadly hatred, as he saw the beautiful head of Josephine, with its coronet, and he put down the glass with an oath.

The officers on the lee side the deck winked slyly at each other. Wright's virulent hatred of the fallen emperor had become a matter of half-jest, half contempt in the ship, and only his rank prevented his hearing of it from the naturally outspoken sea officers.

"Old Crabs's got the colic, Charley," said Tom Chumley; "the poor woman little thought her very dummy would make him scowl so. What a mug he's got on him. That's the spiteful gripes, sure as a gun."

"Hush, Tom," muttered Duncomb. "Old man'll hear you. By Jove, he's got a new fit."

The captain's face had turned pale and red and purple alternately, as he looked at the lugger, and now he suddenly wheeled round and stared eagerly round the horizon.

"Mr. Weatherston," he cried, harshly. "Here."

It was the first lieutenant he addressed, the next dignitary to himself in the ship, and that worthy pulled himself together and came stiffly toward his superior, not liking the abruptly imperious manner of the summons.

"How far are we from the nearest coast, Mr. Weatherston?" cried the captain, sharply.

"How far, sir?"

"Yes, how far, sir? Blast it all, don't repeat my words. How far? You took the ship out, and have your log and time, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. We're clear of the jetties one hour and thirty-five minutes," answered the first Luff, more graciously. "We're making about seven knots, sir."

The captain gave the rail an angry slap as he ejaculated:

"Not enough yet. We've got to be on the high seas, and that's three marine leagues from the coast."

Weatherston, a quiet, matter-of-fact man of sixty, who never hoped to be a captain, looked puzzled.

"Not enough for what, sir?"

"To blow that cursed French Jezebel out of the water," growled Wright. "Do you see her figure-head, Weatherston?"

"Can't say, sir. No."

"Well, it's the head of the Empress Josephine, as they used to call her, Bonaparte's divorced wife."

"A very nice woman, I've heard," said the first lieutenant, innocently. "Did you ever meet her in Paris, captain?"

Captain Wright scowled deeply, and his face grew purple.

"No," he growled, "how the deuce should I have seen her? Are you a fool?"

Then he turned away and took two or three angry turns up and down the deck, when he came up again to Weatherston.

"Clap on top-gallants and stand out into the channel, sir," he said, sharply. "I want to see if that impudent French jade will dare dog us into deep water. If she does, by heavens I'll send a shot through that dainty figure-head of hers, and send her back to Havre to refit."

The first officer looked amazed, crying.

"But we're at peace now, sir."

"Peace! curse peace! I'll never have peace with anything that carries that head or any thing belonging to it. Do as I order, sir, at once."

And he wheeled short round and went back to his cabin, where he contented himself with watching the obnoxious lugger through the stern windows till he was sensible, from the increased speed of the ship that Weatherston had obeyed his orders and piled on more sail than before.

The white line of the lugger's bow began to drop, and the captain lost sight of the smiling face of the image of the unfortunate empress, when he said to himself:

"Curse her! she can't do any better. I was a fool to get angry about it."

He turned back to his table and was about taking up a book, when his eye was attracted by something white that fluttered above the yacht.

In another minute out swelled another broad white sail, as the Belle Creole came down after the frigate, wing-and-wing, and the arch smile of the figure-head became plain on the field of the telescope as she gained on the ship.

Then Captain Wright uttered a furious curse and shouted up through the skylight:

"Mr. Weatherston! Pile on every stitch the ship will carry at once, sir. Run her under water, but beat that lugger. Do you hear, sir?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

The answer came down the skylight, and was followed by a stream of loud orders, accompanied by the trample of many feet, as the sailors rushed to the shrouds and went aloft or seized the halyards and sheets on deck.

The gallant frigate felt the impulse of the new canvas, and plowed the water with increased speed, while the captain, too anxious to remain below, went on deck and began to criticise everything Weatherston had done, to that worthy's disgust and anger, till he had satisfied himself that there was not a foot of standing rigging in the ship capable of carrying a sail, that had not its full burden.

Then he observed, reluctantly:

"She's doing all she can, Weatherston."

"I should say so," was the dry reply. "I don't know the frigate that can come up to her going full. We're going a good fourteen knots an hour now, sir, if you'll believe it."

The captain turned and looked astern. There was the lugger at the same distance and no more, under three sails only, with several more still to spare, and she was going to and fro in a way that showed she was not trying to pass the frigate, but anxious to keep her at a comparative distance.

He uttered a deep curse of angry amazement.

"By heavens, she is dogging us. Playing with us too. Well, we'll see about that. Give me the trumpet, sir."

The first lieutenant, with a look of some amazement, handed the captain the speaking trumpet, turned on his heel and went to his cabin. Mr. Weatherston felt that he was being snubbed without cause.

The captain, without noticing his executive officer's sense of injury, suddenly bellowed out:

"Hands by the braces! In lee braces! Sharp up there! Sharp! Put the helm down, quarter-master."

The vessel, obedient to her helm and the new angle at which the wind struck her sails, heeled over under her press of canvas, nearly at right angles to her former course, and began to run down the channel, close-hauled to a stiff southerly breeze, across the forefoot of the lugger.

As soon as the ship had completed her change the captain looked at the white lugger.

There she was, at the same distance, just a long mile, having hauled her wind in a manner that showed she meant to dog the frigate.

Then the captain uttered a curse again.

"Clear away one of the main-deck guns!" he shouted, fiercely. "Pass the word for the gunner to send a twenty-four pound shot under that fellow's bows, and if he'll only chip the figure-head I'll give him a five-pound note. D've hear?"

The order flew with lightning rapidity, and before five minutes were over a gun had been cleared away and loaded, beside which stood the gunner.

"Are you all ready?" cried the captain.

"All ready, sir!" came from the gun.

"Give it to her, then!"

The gunner took a long squint and applied the linstock—for it was before the days of priming tubes.

A broad flash, a white cloud, a loud boom, and they saw the shot go skipping over the waves, under the bows of the lugger, where it dashed up a shower of spray.

The captain, watching intently through the glass, uttered a joyful cry:

"Hit, by heavens! Call the gunner up."

Through the glass he saw that the shot had actually struck the beautiful head of the Empress Josephine, and had knocked it into splinters, while the little yacht, hauling her wind, spread another sail and stood off rapidly, as if to get out of range, fearful of another shot.

Captain Wright burst out into a laugh of scornful triumph and shook his fist at the lugger.

"You'll come round chaffing me, will you, you miserable frog-eating curs?" he roared, as if the Frenchman could hear him.

Then, seeming satisfied with the lesson he had given the audacious Gaul, he added, more placably:

"Secure that gun!"

As the gunner came up with a grim smile on his weather-beaten phiz, the captain added:

"Bolter, you're a brick. Come down to my cabin, and I'll do what I promised and more. You're not afraid of a glass of grog?"

"No, sir," answered Bolter, grinning; and with that the captain passed the trumpet to Chumley, as officer of the deck, and went down to his cabin, where he filled out a stiff tumbler of grog for his subordinate, and became—for him—so unusually gracious that Bolter hardly knew what to make of it, till the captain said:

"There's your five pounds, Bolter. You don't know what those devils made me suffer for twenty years, and I hope you never will have such a hard experience as mine. I swear, when I think of it, I wonder sometimes I don't go mad. Oh, if this war were only not over so soon, I'd—Never mind. Bolter, drink your grog and be off."

He noticed, from the smile of the old sailor, that the grog and condescension were too much for him. Bolter looked as if he might get too familiar, and the instinct of the captain warned him to return to the stiff formality of naval discipline.

Bolter grinned, pulled his forelock, and was leaving the cabin when they heard the dull report of a distant gun, followed by a loud cry on deck.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE DUEL.

CAPTAIN WRIGHT heard the cry, and listened intently. A moment later it was followed by a crashing of wood in the fore part of the vessel, and Bolter, in the freedom generated by two stiff rummers of grog, blurted out:

"Hit, by the Lord Harry!"

The captain, waiting for no more, took two steps up the companionway and reached the deck, where he found officers and men standing as if astounded, staring at the lugger, which had now retired to a distance of a good mile and a half, while a cloud of smoke drifting from her side to leeward showed that she had actually fired at the frigate.

If a small boy should deliberately throw a stone at a policeman, and stand ready with a second before him; if a toy terrier should suddenly fly at a bloodhound; if a common soldier should slap his colonel's face on parade, the beholders might see an expression on the face of the party assaulted such as reigned on the countenances of the British officers, as the lugger fired that shot. They looked not so much enraged as astounded—flabbergasted, unable to realize for a moment what it all meant.

Then the captain turned black with fury, as he shrieked out:

"Bear up for that infernal puppy. Beat to quarters! Blow him out of the water! Do you hear?—curse you! Are ye deaf? Beat to quarters—quick! Hands by the braces. Lay her dead for that lugger."

He seemed almost beside himself with rage at the audacious insult, and in a moment the ship became a scene of bustle and noise, which subsided to perfect silence by the time the long roll of the drum had ceased, when the men stood at quarters waiting for orders, and the officers of the divisions came up and saluted to report.

When all was still, the form of the boatswain came rolling aft, and he touched his hat, saying quietly:

"The lugger's shot knocked away the whole of the figure-head, sir."

The captain started. He had almost lost sight of the fact that the shot had struck the Penelope.

"Our figure-head?" he asked, incredulously.

"At this distance! Impossible!"

The boatswain touched his hat.

"Very good, sir. Any orders?"

"No, Harpin, no. Stay! I cannot believe that till I see it. Show me."

A third time the other saluted.

"Very good, sir."

They went forward, followed by curious,

sidelong glances from the men at the guns, till the boatswain pointed over the bows and said:

"There it is, sir."

And this time Captain Wright was too much impressed to scowl and swear.

The boatswain had told the truth.

The figure-head of the frigate, a crowned female, about ten feet high, had been decapitated by a shot, the head of the lady being knocked from the shoulders, along with some of the scroll-work around it.

The captain looked at the lugger, and then at Harpin.

"That must have been a long gun," he began; when, just at that moment, a flash came from the distant vessel, a white cloud burst from her snowy hull, and another shot came over the sea, straight for the frigate.

"Luff!" shouted the captain, as he saw the missile skipping along, and the bows of the ship gave a wide sweep as she was thrown up into the wind—for a shot takes time to cross a mile and a half of sea, and a moving target is proverbially hard to hit.

But not the shifting of the *Penelope* saved her that time, as it happened. In fact, it turned out a bad move.

In another moment the shot came in over the port cat-head and tore its way across the deck of the frigate, striking a gun-carriage on the starboard quarter, knocking it into splinters, killing four men and wounding several more as only such a shot can, happening to hit in such a place.

The anger had all faded from Wright's face, to be replaced by the cool keenness of a first-class officer.

He ran aft, crying:

"Keep cool, men. Fill away, quartermaster. Hands by the braces. Let her fall off. Port broadside, stand by. Now, boys, give her a British broadside! Fire!"

The roar of the guns was followed by a thundering cheer from the men, as the captain gained the quarter-deck.

The white cloud of smoke came back over the decks as the wind blew it in, and no one could see what had been the effect of the broadside till the veil drifted to leeward which it did in a few seconds. When it did, however, they saw the white sails of the lugger at the same distance as before, the little vessel not seeming to be injured in the least.

The captain called up to the mast-head.

"Did you see the shots up there?"

"Ay, ay, sir," came down.

"Where did they go?"

"Fell short, sir. Were out of range."

The captain was astounded.

"I'll soon settle that," he observed, and with the word he went up the mizzen shrouds into the top, with an activity that his fifty years did not promise, and called down his orders.

"Bout ship, Mr. Weatherston, and give him the starboard broadside, as soon as she fills on the other tack."

Obedient to her helm the *Penelope* flew up into the wind, her sails rattling like thunder, and pointed her head back toward Havre, bringing the saucy little lugger under the other broadside, with the dark coast of France for a background to her white sails.

"Couldn't be a fairer target," muttered the captain; and then he set the glass to his eye and watched the lugger with a fixed intensity nothing could disturb, till the starboard broadside of the frigate went off beneath him.

Thus it happened that he saw with perfect distinctness the effect of the second broadside, as the shot went skipping over the waves in lines of white foam, holding their course for the lugger with a precision that showed the British had not forgotten the lessons of the American war a year before, when their gunnery had been so wild. But, to his intense mortification, not one reached the little vessel, as he could note by the clouds of spray where they finally dropped, and he shouted down:

"Load up again, elevate two degrees. We ought to reach her surely."

And, as he spoke, came another flash from the lugger, which vanished in a cloud of smoke, and a third shot came skimming over the white caps, straight for the waist of the *Penelope*.

Crash!

It struck her just above the bends and tore through the ship's hull under the deck, making a tremendous clatter, at which the captain roared down:

"Where did that shot strike, boatswain?"

Harpin toddled to the main hatch, dived down and came up presently, just as the men got the guns loaded again.

"Went through the ward-room, sir," he yelled up. "Officers' crockery all gone but no one hurt."

"Are those guns pointed?" cried the captain, not noticing the report.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Fire as they bear, then."

And away went a second broadside, gun after gun firing at the will of its captain, Wright watching the result through the glass as before.

To his great joy he saw that his twenty-four-pounders carried up to and beyond the lugger, though not a shot struck her.

The little clouds of white spray shot up out of the sea all round her, and he roared down:

"We've got the range now. Give it to her as carefully as you can. Ten pounds to the man that cripples or sinks her."

The men worked at the guns as hard as they could, while the captain watched the lugger through the glass.

He saw that she was setting another sail, the small spanker or jigger, set over the stern, while a cloud of white duck was bellying out on either side of her lug-sails, showing that she had boomed out in racing guise.

As he watched her through the glass, moreover, he saw that she was changing her course, and running off wing and wing again, down the channel, along the coast.

"Aha! she's had enough of it—has she?" he growled to himself. "Now, my lady, I think I've got you."

The lugger was between him and the land, and he saw that she would have to pass within half a mile to scrape out to sea, when she would be dead under the lee of the frigate, instead of having the weather gage, as hitherto.

Accordingly he shouted down his orders:

"Hands 'bout ship, Weatherston, and then fill away with the wind on the port quarter. The lugger's running, sir! Keep both broadsides ready."

Obedient to the orders, the frigate luffed again, swung round her sails, and went rapidly off in pursuit of the little lugger, which was becoming every moment more plain.

To escape being chased into Havre by the frigate at a time when British influence was triumphant everywhere, the bold lugger was standing out to the open sea, regardless of the risk.

True, England and France were nominally at peace, and the British ship had attacked the lugger in sheer wantonness, but it made no difference in that day of French humiliation, what the provocation. A French vessel stood no chance in law or battle, unless she had force to back her.

The courses of the two vessels were therefore now on converging lines, the frigate going free to the northwest, the lugger wing and wing, heading due north, to avoid running into the coast.

About a mile ahead of both was a bold cape, that jutted out into the sea above a base fringed with sand, and it was the hope of Captain Wright to force the lugger ashore or get her under his broadside at point-blank range, before she could double the cape.

But, to do so, he had to sail the fastest he knew and he had no time to fire.

On dashed the frigate, on skimmed the lugger, coming closer every minute.

The *Belle Creole* sailed two feet to the frigate's one, now she was under her racing canvas, but she had twice as far to go, and it was evident that before she doubled the cape, she would have to remain under the frigate's broadside for at least five minutes.

Not long, but long enough to sink her. She could not afford to take the blows that hardly stirred her huge antagonist.

On sailed both vessels till less than half a mile apart, when the big ship suddenly luffed up, and the captain was about to order a broadside.

At that very moment when they could plainly see the men on the lugger's deck, clustered round a long gun amidships, a fourth flash issued from that very gun, and a shot crashed into the *Penelope's* quarter, raking the deck, knocking the wheel to splinters, killing the helmsman, and sending one of the quarter-deck carronades over in a complete summerset into the sea.

The effect of the shot was instantaneous. The vessel, released from the pressure of the helm, as the rudder flew round, yawed wildly to and fro, with her sails thundering in the wind, as she drifted down on the lugger, and in the midst of the confusion attending the mastering of the tiller and extricating the ship from the peril of a lee shore, the guns were abandoned, the lugger forgotten, and the crew of the frigate had enough to do to avoid running on shore themselves.

When at last the tiller was grappled between decks, the ship worked off-shore, and holding a safe offing, the lugger was nowhere to be seen, and Tom Chumley remarked confidentially to his friend Duncomb:

"I tell you what it is, Charley. The man that fired that shot is fit to be made first lord of gunnery practice to the King of England. He saved the lugger when nothing else would have done it. I wonder where she's gone to?"

"Round the cape, confound her," was the sulky answer. "They've only ten feet of water there for a good fifty miles, and she can laugh at us. Time we piped down, I'm beginning to think."

And the captain seemed to share the opinion at last; for he ordered the guns secured and sent the men below, his face the very picture of sullen rage.

By the time the *Penelope* opened the white sails of the lugger again, she was on the other side of the cape, a good five miles alee, under

easy canvas once more, running down the channel ahead of the frigate, as if waiting for her to come up.

The captain ground his teeth and said to Weatherston:

"I'm going to my cabin. Keep that fellow in sight, but don't appear to notice him. If he follows us into deep water, I'll have him yet."

Then he went down into his cabin, and tried to distract his thoughts by reading, while the ship's company of the *Penelope* settled down to their usual avocations, and the boatswain piped to dinner.

When the ward-room officers met at their meal, of course the leading topic of conversation was the lugger, and it speedily appeared that diverse opinions were entertained as to her performances.

"I think it served us right," Charley Duncomb observed. "The lugger was not troubling us and we fired at her as if we were still at war with France."

"I hate a Frenchman anyhow," retorted Tom Chumley. "It might not have been strictly according to law to fire at her, but we found out one thing; that she's no business on the high seas. She's nothing more nor less than a pirate."

"Why?" asked Clapp, the purser. "That's a pretty hard word, Mr. Chumley—pirate."

"Well, if he's not a pirate, what is he doing with a thirty-two-pounder on his decks? He was able to outshoot this frigate, and she's a twenty-four-pounder ship."

"But he may be a vessel of the navy," objected Duncomb, "or coast guard. He had a right to return our fire. Any man has that. We made an attack that was illegal and unprovoked."

"I don't think it was," returned Chumley.

"Why, what had she done to provoke it?"

"A good deal."

"But what?"

"Well, in the first place that figure-head."

"Nonsense."

"You may call it nonsense, but the skipper didn't think so."

"Oh, the skipper be—"

Duncomb ended with a cough. Like most officers of the ship, he hated the duty on which she was going and cordially disliked the commander who had volunteered to perform what he considered a degrading task.

"The skipper's soured," he went on, presently, "and allows his dislike to run away with him."

"He didn't this time," returned Tom.

"How do you know?"

"By what I saw."

"And what was that?"

"You know as well as I. We're not at war with France under a king, but we are still with this Bonaparte. All Europe is his enemy. He is a public foe."

"But he's a prisoner," objected Clapp. "The poor beggar's shut up in St. Helena, and likely to stay there under Sir Udson Low. He's a sharp chap. I used to know 'im when 'e was governor, down in the West Indies. Eyes in the back of his head, as the saying is."

"But if he ever gets out," said Chumley, argumentatively, "you'll all agree we'd have to lick him again."

"Not necessarily," said Duncomb. "He might go over among the Yankees, for example, and stay there in peace. He could never hurt us again."

"Be that as it may," retorted Tom, "he and his friends are public enemies—at all events, our enemies. That lugger belongs to a bitter Bonapartist, who is not afraid to flaunt his likings in our face."

"Well, hasn't he a right to his likes and dislikes?" asked Duncomb, hotly.

"Yes; and we've got a right to thrash him like blazes, if we can catch him. Do you know what I believe that fellow's going to try on us?"

"No."

"Well, I do. I'm sure of it."

"And what is it?"

"He's going to try and carry off the prisoner at St. Helena or I'm a Dutchman."

There was a universal cry of surprise.

"What makes you think so?"

"Ridiculous!"

"Oh, Tom's found a mare's nest."

"Come, tell us why?"

"By Jove, that's a good one."

"Give us your reasons, oracle."

Tom Chumley looked round at his jeering comrades, and said:

"Very well. You can laugh, but I tell you this: We're going on guard at St. Helena. I'll bet any man at this table ten pound to five we see that hooker after we're there."

There was a silence at this. No one cared to take the bet, and Tom went on:

"You think you're all very wise, but I'll ask you a question: What's the present national flag of France?"

"White, with three gold fleur de lis," was the prompt response of Lieutenant Lovell, the youngest in the ward room.

"Very well. Did any of you see the flag the

lugger hoisted when we were in irons after that last shot of hers?"

"He didn't show any."

"Had no flag."

"None, I'll swear."

"I saw none."

"What do you mean?"

Tom listened with a smile to the clamor, and then retorted, triumphantly:

"No—you saw nothing—you were all in a devil of a stew about going on the breakers, and never looked her way. Well, I did, and I swear before Heaven she hoisted a tricolor as she sailed away. That settles it. She's Bonapartist, and we're justified in sinking her."

CHAPTER VI.

A BOY CAPTAIN.

MEANTIME, on board the lugger, things had been going on in a way that denoted she was manned by reckless men, careless of their lives.

At the moment when the frigate drove them so nearly on shore and yawed to give them her broadside, Jean Martin, stripped to the waist, his dark hair and huge beard flying in the wind, stood at the breech of the long thirty-two-pounder gun amidships, and laughed bitterly, remarking:

"That's the way with you English, but you'll find out there's no Brueys or Villeneuve here. No blundering, my friend; neither can afford it. Now!"

As he spoke, he jumped to one side, and the sailor by the vent applied the long linstock, when the lucky shot, that disabled the Penelope's rudder so skillfully, was fired.

The French sailors burst into shouts of delight as they saw their huge foe so suddenly rendered helpless, but Martin only gave a short, scornful laugh, and turned toward the quarter-deck, saying:

"I told you we'd do it, captain. Before he's got into control again we shall be behind the cape. What shall we do to show him we defy him?"

Delmont smiled.

"Set the tricolor, I suppose. He may as well know what flag we sail under."

"It is right, my captain," cried the one-eyed sailor, with a grin of pleasure. "Let the cursed *rosbifs* see it, sailors."

And up fluttered the tricolor to the peak of the spanker, as the lugger skimmed on and hauled her wind to double the cape, beyond which was safety.

Not for long did it fly, and it was hidden from the land by the lugger's sails; but when it came down they had rounded the point and were running out into a shallow bay, where they knew the frigate could not follow them.

Then Delmont said to Martin:

"It is enough now. We have avenged the insult to our dead empress. Let us hasten on our voyage before this vaunting Englishman."

Martin nodded and said to the sailors:

"Ay, ay, secure the guns. It will not do in these days to be fighting in broad daylight."

While the men are replacing the lashings of the long gun, it is time that we took a survey of the lugger.

She well deserved the name of "La Belle," for she was very beautiful. No yacht could have been neater in every respect, and her ropes were coiled away with a precision unusual save in a ship-of-war.

Her decks were as white as snow, all her fittings painted white, even her standing rigging covered with white paint instead of tar, so that in a heavy sea, with little canvas spread, she might be almost invisible in the foam a couple of miles off.

Her very guns and gun-carriages were covered with the same white vail, giving her a strange, unearthly look, while all the men visible were dressed in a uniform of white flannel, with which their dark faces and beards contrasted strongly.

And what a crew they had!

First, there was Albert Delmont, a mere boy, but with a reckless look in his young face, clouded with deep gloom, that told of one who was ready for any desperate service.

Old Jean Martin, his black hair and beard grizzling fast, his solitary eye roving restlessly round the horizon, the other covered by a black patch that gave him a savage look.

The other men were swarthy, thick-set fellows, with broad shoulders and savage faces, heavily bearded, their white dress making them look more swarthy than ever.

The lugger had only five guns, but they were unusually large for a vessel of her size in those days.

In fitting her out, Jean Martin had unconsciously acted in advance of his age, and had concentrated his strength into a few guns that threw the greatest possible weight of metal, all of one caliber, the broadside guns being carro-nades.

By Delmont's consent, though the latter was nominal commander of the expedition, Jean had assumed charge of the lugger, while the young ex-soldier became a docile pupil in his hands, in all matters pertaining to the sea.

But Delmont had one point of superiority over all his crew, which made them look up to him.

He was the only man on board that could find the latitude and longitude by the stars, and he knew even more than Martin about guns and gunnery.

When they came out of Havre, it was not without design that the lugger had followed the Penelope so closely. The ship's destination was notorious, and Martin had agreed readily to the young man's suggestion that they could do no better than to make the British frigate guide them to St. Helena.

"Besides," said this audacious boy, in the plenitude of his reckless assurance, "we may get a chance to sink this Briton on our voyage, and the emperor will have one enemy the less."

Jean Martin uttered a guffaw at this, which was before the frigate fired.

"No, no, my captain, that would never do! We may hit the frigate a good many times, and she will swim, but if we receive one of her broadsides, it will be good-by, Jean, to us."

Albert shook his head.

"I don't believe it. Did you ever see any gunnery experiments, Martin?"

"Well, my captain, a few—that is, about a thousand, perhaps."

"Ah, you mean battles."

"Certainly, my captain."

This was said very dryly.

"I see," answered Albert tranquilly, "but those go for nothing."

"For nothing!"

"Certainly. There is too much confusion to note effects. But at St. Cyr, under the emperor's orders, we instituted some real experiments."

"Well, my captain?"

"Well, Martin, we tried a twenty-four and a thirty-two for range, and the thirty-two carries nearly a quarter of a mile further than the twenty-four at high angles, with a difference of three hundred yards in the point-blank."

"From which you think—"

"From which I know that we can put shot into that frigate when she cannot reach us, for she carries twenty-fours."

It was just at that moment when the frigate first fired at them and destroyed the figure-head of La Belle Creole, at which the crew seemed for a while demoralized, even Martin, in his excitement and surprise, rapping out orders to haul the lugger's wind and get out of range at once.

And in all the confusion, it was the boy Albert, at whom the old sailors looked with distrust, who remained perfectly cool, and, bringing out two compasses from the cabin, of a pattern the men had never seen before, called to Martin:

"Come here, quick, old grumbler. Did you never take an enemy's range before?"

Then Martin, looking amazed and a little frightened, obeyed, and took one of the compasses, with which Albert sent him to the bow of the lugger, directing him to stand at a certain spot he would find marked on the deck, and take the bearings of the British frigate.

Ignorant as the sailors were of the principles of triangulation, they looked on all these operations with distrust, and when the young captain finally ordered the long gun cleared away and told them they were out of range of the enemy, but able to hit him themselves, they all looked surly and incredulous except Martin, who said emphatically:

"Don't look sulky. Marshal Ney never mistook his man. The little captain knows his business. Clear away the gun and load it."

And it was Albert Delmont, who apparently had never been to sea in his life, who pointed the first gun which struck the bow of the Penelope, announcing, before he fired, what he was going to do.

And when Jean Martin, looking through the glass, found that he had accomplished his promise and announced the fact, the simple French sailors, superstitious like all their class, changed their opinion of the young officer, and obeyed him from that moment with perfect docility.

And from that moment Jean Martin became jealous of Albert, not as a chief, but as a cannoner; for the old sailor was remarkably proud of his own powers as a marksman, and became infatuated with a desire to beat that first shot.

It was Martin who fired the second and third shots, and it was Martin who, when every sailor on board was saying his prayers in secret, and expecting to be driven on shore, announced that he was going to run the gantlet of the big ship's battery, and get the lugger out of peril instead of going back.

And it was Martin, after the battle was over and the lugger was safe out of gunshot of the frigate, running out toward Cape La Hogue, who said to Albert in confidence:

"My captain, keep up appearances, and the men will think you're an old sailor. You have the making of an admiral, and I've heard say there was one English admiral called Blake who was a soldier till he was forty, and then turned admiral, and a good one, too."

Albert smiled rather faintly.

"Perhaps I may become a sailor in time," he said; "but—I don't know what is the matter with me now, Jean. I feel strangely, as if I were about—would you believe it—to—"

Here he turned very white indeed, and Jean took him by the arm, whispering:

"Come to the cabin. Don't let them see it. I'll tell you what's the matter."

Then he turned to the crew.

"Mathieu Canot, take the deck. The captain and I are going down to study the charts. Keep well out to sea; but don't lose sight of the frigate."

Then he hurried the young man to the cabin, to the stern windows, and whispered:

"It is only *maladie du mer*; but don't let them see it. I've told them you are a naval officer, or they would never have come under you. Throw up all you like out of the stern, and then take brandy—as much as you like—get drunk if you will—but don't come on deck till you're quite well. I'll tell them that you need sleep."

"But why didn't I give way before?" asked Albert, a little while after, when he felt better for the brandy.

Martin shrugged his shoulders.

"An affair of the nerves. There was no time to get sea-sick then. I've known a whole cabin full of women nearly dead, to get up as well as ever, when some one started the cry of fire. Go to sleep, my captain, and when you get up you will be well. I say it, and I have been at sea for ten years and ten more in the artillery of the Old Guard. But what did you think of my shot to-day?"

"I think it was wonderful, Martin. How did you do it?"

Martin smiled proudly.

"A matter of feeling, my captain. When I love a gun I know how she will act, and I love that gun. I have christened her 'La Belle Vengeance,' and we two will make her satisfy the debt we owe the English. What are your orders now?"

"Keep the frigate in sight and get into the Atlantic Ocean before her," said Albert, sleepily. "As soon as I've conquered the sea I'll conquer that fellow before we get to St. Helena."

Then he fell asleep, and did not wake up till next morning, when he went on deck to find the lugger under a close-reefed jib and main-sail, beating out of the channel in the teeth of a southwesterly gale, with the frigate Penelope in sight about five miles to leeward, hull down.

He felt quite well, but ravenously hungry, and asked Martin, who was on deck:

"Has the frigate shown any disposition to chase us?"

Martin shook his head.

"She doesn't see us, in my opinion. The sea fog is so dense, the spray so white, that we are almost invisible. It is an old trick of the smugglers, this white paint. It is good till it wears off, and that takes a little time. But you are well, my captain?"

"Quite, I think, and hungry as—. How soon do we have breakfast?"

"At once, my captain. We have set the two watches now. I take the starboard, and Mathieu Canot the port watch. You, as the chief, are not supposed to stand a watch at all."

As they went down, Albert remarked:

"I told you it would not take long for me to learn to be a sailor. I know the names of your ropes already, and can give the necessary orders to make sail and tack."

"You have, indeed, my captain, learned as much as I did in my first six months, and you have only been three weeks in a port and two days at sea. But let me say a word in your ear. Do not let the men hear you give orders, save through me, till I tell you it is safe. You are in your place when we are fighting, but not now."

Then they went down to breakfast, and Albert found his appetite so enormous that he felt ashamed of it. And when they came on deck again the gale had increased, and the lugger was getting perilously near the coast of England, so that it became necessary to tack, which operation Albert watched carefully, storing up the orders in his mind for future use, when he should command in truth. For this young man, who had been kept in school while others were fighting battles of the giants, had become so fiery in his impatience for command that he was ready to do and dare anything.

The mad enthusiasm with which he and others had started on their present wild expedition to carry off the captive emperor from his prison was only one of many cases, but Albert was one of the first to make the attempt, and his very audacity was the secret of his coming nearer success than older men.

None but a young man, knowing his mission, would have dared to dog a frigate going on purpose to prevent such attempts; and the very impudence with which he had fired at the frigate had raised the spirits of his men, and added another chance of success to his expedition.

For the sailors of the Belle Creole were all men of middle age, who had not been at sea, save in fishing boats, since the British had driven the Gallic fleets from the Channel and destroyed French commerce.

Cowed by a long succession of reverses, it needed a man of iron will and fearless nature to rouse them to the deeds it was necessary for

them to do if they hoped to rescue the exile of St. Helena.

And Albert Delmont had that in him, as one could see from a certain look in his eye, that promised to make him a leader on the seas such as only comes once in a score of years.

The lugger kept on her course out to sea all that day, and before next morning was heaving on the long swells of the Atlantic ocean, with the frigate *Penelope* a mere white speck on the ocean astern—so much had the small vessel gained in beating out against the southwesterly gales.

When noon came, and a glimpse of the sun was obtained, Delmont found the place of the vessel on the chart off Cape St. Matthew, heading for Finisterre.

When he told this to Martin, in the cabin, the old sailor said joyfully:

"So much the better. If we have made ten miles and more on that frigate—under short sail, too—we can beat her as soon as the wind changes and we put on our big sails. We can get to St. Helena a week before her."

Albert looked up from the chart he was examining in the cabin.

"You think that would be wise?"

"Certainly."

"Why?"

"Why! Parbleu! easy enough. If we have a week's start we may get him out before that fellow comes."

"But if it require more than a week?"

"Then we shall have at least the advantage of being there first."

Albert looked at him steadily.

"Do you know, Martin, sometimes I think that although you are an old sailor, you are an old simpleton."

Martin turned red and growled:

"My captain!"

Albert raised his hand.

"Yes, your captain. Remember that. You think I'm an ignoramus, who knows nothing of the sea, but I tell you that you are, on the other hand, a novice in command. You are good to obey orders and work the ship, that is all."

Martin turned redder, and answered:

"I can fire a gun, too, monsieur."

"Yes, you can do that. That is to say, you can point it, when I have given you the distance and elevation."

Martin looked excessively mortified, and it required all his adoration of Marshal Ney's memory, to prevent him from breaking out grumbling against this young man who presumed to rebuke an old sailor.

But Albert went on calmly:

"It will take us at least six months to arrange any plan of escape that will have a chance of success, and if we are recognized in the neighborhood of the island we shall never succeed. Do you begin to understand?"

Martin scratched his head.

"Yes, my captain."

"Very well; then you see that it will be absolutely necessary for us to sink that frigate before we get to St. Helena."

Martin started back, and stared at the boy captain incredulously.

"Sink her?"

"I said sink her."

"But you are mad. It cannot be done."

"Why not?"

"How *can* it be done?" asked Martin in his despair, retorting the question.

"Easily enough."

"But tell me how?"

"With pleasure. We must bore a hole in her bottom and let the water in—that is all. If we make the hole large enough, she will go to the bottom at once."

Martin stared at him with more wonder than before, ejaculating:

"Such a thing was never heard of."

"You are wrong."

"I never heard of it."

"That's another thing."

"And I've been to sea since—"

"Twenty years or so. Granted. But then this thing was done before that time. You don't read, that's the trouble. Did you ever hear of an American named Fulton, a *savant*?"

Martin stared.

"Never, monsieur."

He had become respectful in the excess of his astonishment.

"Very well. I have. He came to France during the consulate, and wished to enter our service, and sink the British fleet before Boulogne. The emperor did not believe in his schemes; but we had the plans before us at St. Cyr, and by means of one of his inventions I am going to sink the *Penelope* in the Atlantic ocean, before we get to St. Helena, that no one may know us when we get there."

Martin wiped his forehead.

"You are a daring officer, my captain," he said, resignedly, "and if you do this you can do anything. But I should like to know how it is to be done, and when?"

"Not here, Martin. There are too many ships about here."

"When, then?"

"When that ship and we are alone on the ocean, with none to see us, Martin. We cannot

even use our gun, unless we are certain it cannot be heard. Is there not, on our voyage, some solitary part of the ocean, where this can be done? I depend on your knowledge now."

Martin hesitated.

"There is only one such spot."

"And that is?"

"In the Horse Latitudes, crossing the line.

No one goes there if he can help it."

"Very well, Martin, when we get there I will sink the *Penelope*."

And so saying, Albert returned to his chart, Jean Martin going on deck.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LUGGER UNMASKS.

SIX weeks had passed away in their ocean variations of storm and sunshine, fair winds and foul, in those days before steam was known as a power, when the voyage to India was a nine months' journey. The frigate *Penelope* and her tireless attendant the lugger had run into the trades, down toward the coast of South America, and had finally got into the "doldrums" or regions of calm. Vessel after vessel had been passed, but the lugger avoided them all, keeping far away under a mere rag of sail, unseen by most of the shipmasters.

Her racing model in those times of bluff bows and short masts, when ten knots an hour was thought extraordinary going, enabled her to keep away from any one she wished to avoid and after they left the English Channel Albert took care to make his craft invisible from the decks of the *Penelope*, though he kept the royals of the frigate in sight from his own mast-head, and a watch stationed there all the time, with orders not to lose the frigate for a moment.

At night the lugger would creep nearer, so as to avoid losing sight of her enemy, and every morning at dawn she was stripped of her canvas, to make her still more hard to discover, till the frigate's location was made out and a safe distance re-established.

Thus it happened that the *Belle Creole*, which had entered the Bay of Biscay a good twenty miles ahead of the *Penelope*, had fallen astern of her since that time, and the people of the frigate had almost forgotten their adventure in the channel with the saucy lugger, save to make Tom Chumley's ward-room bet the subject of jokes.

Chumley himself, however, remained firm in his opinion, and concluded several wagers to back it, though even he began to waver as day after day passed and no sign of the lugger made its appearance.

So matters went on till they ran out of the northeast trades, and arrived at last in the wearisome Doldrums, where the breeze sunk to a dead calm, with long glassy swells that tossed the ship to and fro with a great creaking of masts, and they had to take in the sails to prevent their whipping into holes, flapping on the masts and standing rigging.

And then it was, after they had been three days in the calm, after the swell of the distant storms had gone down, giving promise of an indefinite period of rest, that Tom Chumley being in the ward-room looking out of a port-hole on the quarter, suddenly jumped to his feet, crying:

"The lugger, by Jove! I told you so."

There was an instant confusion in the ward-room, as the officers jumped up and crowded to the port to look out.

"Nonsense!"

"He's dreaming."

"There's nothing."

"Yes there is."

"What's that?"

"Only a gull."

"It's a vessel."

"No, it's a gull."

Such were the expressions freely bandied about, for most of the officers saw nothing.

Those who did, caught sight of a white object far away on the horizon, hidden every now and then by the low swell, and more like the wing of a gull than anything else they expected to see there.

It certainly was not a sail, and after a long stare it vanished entirely, so that the officers insisted that Chumley must have mistaken a wandering gull for his "ten-pound-bet" lugger, and returned to their various avocations.

But Tom Chumley was not so easily to be satisfied, for he was certain that what he had seen at first was the white hull of the mysterious lugger, though the sight had puzzled him considerably, owing to the fact that no masts were visible.

Regardless of the jests of his companions, he went on deck, though it was his watch below, and went up to his friend Duncomb, who had charge of the deck, saying:

"Has the lookout reported any thing on the starboard quarter lately, Charley?"

Duncomb shook his head.

"No. Why do you ask?"

Chumley replied by the counter-question:

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Of course, my dear boy."

"Tell him to look there now."

Duncomb looked surprised but called up to the mast-head and told the lookout to sweep the

horizon in the direction Tom had indicated, and report what he saw.

They saw the man turn round, look long and earnestly, and then shake his head.

"Nothing, sir, but some floating seaweed and driftwood. Looked like a water-logged ship, sir; but it ain't."

Tom Chumley turned away, saying:

"Thank you."

Then he went to his cabin, brought out a glass and quietly went up the mizzen rigging and up to the cross-trees, followed by more than one curious glance, for it was not usual for officers to go aloft save on some very special duty.

Tom Chumley, however, had an idea, in his head, and he carried it out by a long and searching examination of the object said to exist by the lookout.

As the man had said, it seemed to be a mass of driftwood and seaweed such as often conglomerates at sea, but Tom, after a long and steady look through the glass shut it up and muttered:

"I knew I could not be mistaken."

Then he came down on deck and went straight to the captain's cabin where he said to the marine sentry:

"Knock at the door."

The marine did as requested and the voice of Captain Wright growled sulkily:

"Come in."

Chumley went in.

He found the captain in his shirt-sleeves, fanning himself and looking as sullen as usual. He stared haughtily at Chumley and said:

"Well, sir, what is it?"

Chumley took off his cap.

"I have to report, sir, that the French lugger that fought us in the Channel is on our starboard quarter within four miles, apparently a water-logged wreck, covered with seaweed. I just saw her from the mizzen cross-trees."

The captain stared at him.

"Do you mean what you say?"

"I do, sir."

"If she is water-logged, how do you know it is the same vessel?"

"I don't think she is water-logged, sir."

"You said so, sir."

"I said apparently, sir, but I think there are people on board."

"Why?"

"Because seaweed covered wrecks—all that I ever saw—are resting-places for birds and there's not a bird to be seen on this one, sir. I saw a gull skim by it and try to light, when it fluttered off as if it were frightened."

The captain listened intently and put down his fan to say, more graciously:

"You did right to report, sir. Does any one else know of this?"

"No, sir. I thought it my duty to tell you first."

"And what is your opinion from what you've seen, Chumley?"

"I think, sir, that the lugger has followed us all the way, but that the currents have drifted her closer to us than she thought they would, so her people have struck masts in the night and tried to disguise her."

The captain nodded.

"Any signs of wind?"

"None, sir. Looks like a long calm."

"Very good, sir."

Chumley saluted and left the cabin, and ten minutes afterward "the deck" was electrified by the appearance of "Old Crabs" at an hour when he had been wont to doze in his cabin.

Further, the deck was amazed to see the captain himself go up the mizzen rigging with a glass, take a long survey of some object astern, invisible from the deck and then call down.

"Mr. Chumley there?"

"Here, sir."

"Where did you see it?"

"Starboard quarter, sir. Here."

And Chumley pointed.

The captain nodded and came slowly down the rigging.

As soon as he reached the deck, he said:

"Mr. Weatherston, order out the boats for cutting out work."

Weatherston stared.

"Sir?"

The captain frowned.

"Don't you understand English, sir?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"I said, order out the boats. If you don't choose to give the order, I will."

Weatherston pulled himself up.

"Very good, sir."

Then he called out the necessary orders and the shrill pipe of the boatswain rung through the ship.

The men with the instinct of discipline sprung to their places, and in a few minutes the launch, jolly-boat, pinnace and first and second cutters were over the side, their armed crews waiting the order.

Then the captain called out:

"Silence fore and aft! Men, right astern of us lies that French lugger we chased in the Channel. By the laws of war she is a pirate, for she hoisted a flag that has been forbidden, and fired at an English ship. She has drifted near

us in the calm and is trying to escape, disguised with seaweed, as a wreck. I want you to carry her by boarding and bring her here. If you are resisted kill every man on board, Mr. Weatherston."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you wish to command the boats?"

"If you please, sir."

Now that there was a prospect of fighting, Weatherston brightened up and the men in the boats were grinning.

Mr. Weatherston touched his cap.

"Any orders, sir?"

"None but what I've said. Use your discretion, Weatherston. Mr. Chumley will take the pinnace, Mr. Duncomb the jolly-boat, and the senior young gentlemen will command the cutters. God be with you, gentlemen. Make for the stern of the lugger and be sure you take her."

Now that the morose captain saw a chance of injuring his hated foe, the sullenness had gone from his face. His manner was actually kind as he dispatched his boats on what all knew to be a perilous errand.

They had felt the metal of the lugger before, and although they could not see her from the ship's deck, knew that the captain was not easily deceived.

The men gave a cheer, bent to the oars, and the five boats shot away from the side of the frigate, a twenty-four-pound carronade grinning in the bow of the launch, the marines sitting in the stern-sheets with their muskets resting between their knees, grim and silent as usual.

The captain of the Penelope watched them till they became mere black specks on the horizon, and then went up the mizzen rigging with his glass from which he could command a view of the mass of seaweed that concealed the lugger.

As soon as he covered her with the glass he uttered a low cry.

The lugger had moved.

When Chumley saw her she was on the starboard quarter, when the captain sighted first, she was directly astern.

Now she was on the port quarter.

Moreover, he could see plainly in the glass that his subordinate's suspicions were well founded.

Part of the seaweed covering had fallen away, revealing the white side of the lugger and four sweeps were out, under which she was moving at a slow rate forward, while several white figures were busy tearing off the disguise that served them so far and revealing the vessel completely dismayed.

"They've seen the boats," said Wright to himself, "and are going to fight."

Then he looked for the boats and saw them rowing away dead astern of the frigate, in a direction that showed they had missed their aim and lost the lugger.

Whether this were so or not was yet uncertain. In a calm at sea out of sight of stationary objects it is hard to tell whether the ship swings round except by the compass.

Wright shouted down:

"On deck there. Is the vessel turning at all?"

The officer of the watch who had taken Duncomb's place looked at the compass card and answered:

"Not a bit, sir; steady as a rock."

"Fire a gun about four points abaft the beam with three degrees elevation," was the next order.

The gun spoke out and the captain saw the shot skip over the sea toward the distant lugger, making a line of spray and ricocheting along for nearly two miles and a half.

The boats, as he expected, took the hint, and changed their course toward the lugger, when the latter vessel suddenly altered her course and came sweeping toward the frigate as if to get between her and her boats.

The captain growing anxious, still remained aloft till he could see the men on lugger and boats plainly through the glass, and knew from the actions of the crew of the frigate that the combatants were visible from the deck, when he came down and ordered out the only remaining boats of the frigate—third and fourth cutter and his own gig—to tow the Penelope's head round and bring her broadside to bear on the lugger.

By the time the order was executed, the boats had closed to the lugger, and the French vessel fired the first gun.

Wright uttered a low groan of dismay as he looked at the boats through the glass.

That first shot had knocked the launch to shivers and her crew were swimming to the other boats, while the lugger was still three miles away from the ship, and consequently out of gunshot.

A second gun was fired from that white hull and the boats fell into confusion, turned tail and fled.

But whereas five boats had rowed for the lugger, only three were coming back.

Clearly the gunnery on board that little vessel must be excellent.

The boats had had enough of it and were

coming back in confusion, for which the captain could not blame them.

They were all loaded deeply with the survivors of the crews of the two sunken boats—launch and first cutter—and rowed slowly, while, to the horror of the captain, the lugger was coming after them, her eight long sweeps manned by four men each, while a group of men stood at the long gun amidships.

But the boats seemed to be holding their own in the race for life and the captain saw that the lugger, if she chased them much further, would come in range of his own broadside.

He ordered it loaded, though he had not men disposable for more than six or seven guns, and directed a high elevation to be given the sights.

And, at that very moment the white lugger fired her long gun at the escaping boats and sunk the pinnace.

Full of anguish at the sight, aggravated by his own powerlessness, the captain ordered his broadside fired and saw the shot drop into the sea just beyond the boats, but without reaching the hull of the lugger.

The latter instantly stopped, swept round her broadside to the boats and let drive both carronades with such deadly aim that only a single boat out of the five was left afloat and that one the second cutter, which had less men in it than any of the rest.

Wright uttered a groan and covered his face with his hands.

"My God!" he muttered, "what have I done to deserve this?"

He had lost in ten minutes nearly half his crew and the last boat was rowing frantically for the frigate in a way that showed the demoralization of the men in her, while the sea was covered with the heads of swimmers, into the midst of whom the white lugger moved slowly and majestically.

But as soon as the men could load the Penelope's guns again another hail of iron was poured at the white lugger and this time not without its effect, for one shot was seen to strike her and the splinters flew in showers.

"Give her another dose," shouted Wright in his most vindictive way. "Curse her, we'll get even now."

The answer to the cry came from the distant vessel in the shape of a thirty-two-pound shot, which skipped along under the bows of the Penelope till it ended with a crash and loud yells of pain.

One of the towing boats had been struck and sunk, with two of the crew killed and two more wounded, while the other boat instantly rowed behind the shelter of the ship.

Then for the first time Wright began to look serious as the plan of the foe dawned on him.

The lugger meant to destroy all his boats; then choose her position at will and fire into him when he could not return the fire.

And he saw no way to prevent it, if once she got on his bow or stern.

At present she was under his broadside and he had but one boat left, unless the second cutter succeeded in getting in safely.

But Wright was too good a seaman to be without resources even in so desperate an emergency.

He still had his broadside to the lugger and he was bound to keep it there.

She was sweeping round toward his bow and his boat was behind it.

He shouted down his direction to the boat to pull out again and keep the bow away from the enemy, and in the mean time opened a hot fire on the lugger.

He had one point of safety. The little vessel dared not venture within close range of his twenty-four-pounders, twenty of a side, and as long as he could keep her from raking him he could stand the hammering better than she could.

He had already struck her once and might do it again, while she had but a single gun to fire at him effectively.

Compelled as she was to make a long circuit the lugger could not succeed in preventing the ship from keeping her broadside on and before she could fire her long gun again, the second cutter with Tom Chumley and his friend Charley Duncomb aboard came within hail of the ship.

Not quite soon enough however. Albert Delmont, a fierce light burning in his dark eyes, was standing by the long-gun as it was loaded and he said abruptly to Martin:

"Stand aside. This shot must not be missed and the elevation has changed."

He stepped to the breech himself and took a turn of the elevating screw then pointed the gun carefully and cried, just as the cutter gained the stern of the frigate:

"Now fire!"

The boat was a mere dancing dot under the stern of the ship and had almost passed out of sight before the white line of spray reached the Penelope's rudder.

When it did, however, there was a great shower of foam and splinters and the boy captain turned to Martin with a sardonic smile.

"The enemy has only one boat left, Jean. In two hours I shall sink that ship."

At that very moment the Penelope let fly

another broadside, and a twenty-four pound shot tore through the bulwarks of the yacht and dropped into the sea not ten feet off.

Jean Martin shuddered, and said:

"If we are not careful he will sink us."

Alfred laughed as coolly as ever.

"Not a bit of it. We are at his extreme range now. That shot had just force to penetrate two planks; that is all. We will retire a little and it will not have even that much."

Under the impulse of eight sweeps and the muscle of thirty-two sailors the Belle Creole moved off and the next shot from the frigate fell short.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. HELENA.

OUT in the midst of the dark tropical sea, south of the line, rises the rock of St. Helena. The nearest land is the island of Ascension, desolate and barren, hot as an oven all the year round, with a scanty population living down by the little port where vessels stop for water.

St. Helena is one of those islands that nobody in the world would covet, save for a purpose, and England was the only power, sixty years ago, that had any purpose to gain by occupying it, serving as it did as a half-way house for her Indianmen, where they could touch for water and fresh vegetables.

While as rocky as Ascension, it possesses a fertile soil around the base of its tall mountains, and supports quite a little population of its own.

At the period of Napoleon's imprisonment, slaveholding was still an English colonial institution, and St. Helena had a black population of some extent.

In the month of May, 1820, on one of the lofty peaks of this gloomy looking island, a horseman rode recklessly up and down the rocky road at speed, all alone. He seemed to delight in the fact that no one was near him, and when at last he reached the summit of a cliff that commanded an extensive view of the ocean, he drew rein and uttered an exclamation of pleasure in the French language:

"*Morbleu!* That is well."

There was no mistaking the figure and face of that horseman, made familiar to all the civilized world by hundreds of portraits. The green uniform with white facings, the little three-cornered hat, the white breeches and polished boots, belonged to but one man in the world, the greatest warrior Europe had ever known.

It was Napoleon himself.

His pale face flushed slightly, his eyes flashed, his nostrils dilated as he looked out over the sea, and he said aloud:

"That is beautiful. It is magnificent; and, best of all, I am alone at last."

Indeed, he seemed to be quite alone, for all around him was bare rocks, save for a few scanty bushes, while below him stretched down a steep descent, clothed with tropic grasses, brown and withered in the heat, while behind him was a lonely plateau of rocks that stretched for some miles.

He was, in fact, on the ridge of the island, the highest point for a thousand miles. Nevertheless, as he turned in his saddle to look to one side, his brow contracted and he uttered an angry cry:

"*Peste!* Not even here!"

There was a cleft in the side of the precipice where he looked, and the shako of an English soldier could be seen above it; the man leaning on his musket, staring at the emperor.

The angry prisoner wheeled his horse and rode up to the man, asking, fiercely:

"*Qui vous a placé ici, coquin?*"

[Who placed you here, rascal?]

The man looked stolidly up.

"Anan?" was all he said.

The emperor ground his teeth and turned deadly pale, as a spasm of intense pain crossed his face.

For a moment he could say nothing. The fangs of that terrible cancer that had begun to eat out his life were fastened in his vitals, and his anger had brought on a paroxysm of torture, under which the sweat poured down from his forehead.

The Briton staring at him dimly perceived that something was the matter, and said, civilly enough:

"My orders is to stay here, sir. Be you poorly? I can fire my piece and call up the corporal."

The emperor understood English better than he spoke it, and shook his head faintly, muttering:

"No, no, *ce n'est pas nécessaire*—I do not want it. Ah, *mon Dieu!*"

Then, as the spasm passed away, he smiled in a ghastly way and said to the soldier:

"*Voici.* You drink my 'ealt'—eh?"

He tossed the man a five-franc piece, and the soldier grinned delightedly.

"Thankye, yer honor, thankye. Yer honor, a reel gent, all over."

Their little colloquy was broken by the tramp of a galloping horse, and an English officer rode up, looking pale and vexed, saying in French:

"General, this must not be repeated, or I must report to Sir Hudson, and I fear he will stop your rides."

The emperor smiled good-naturedly.

"And why, my good captain?"

"Because you have been out of my sight for at least ten minutes."

"Peste! what a crime!"

"It is against orders, general."

The emperor frowned.

"Captain Gervaise, I have a title, and it is not that of general."

Gervaise shrugged his shoulders, but did not reply, save by an irritating smile.

"Do you hear me, monsieur?" cried the emperor angrily.

Gervaise smiled again.

"Certainly I do, general. But you are not wise to excite yourself. You know the orders, and I am not responsible for them."

The emperor laughed bitterly.

"No. No one is responsible here for any insult. Fool that I was to trust to the honor of England. Why even Alexander of Russia would have treated me in a more worthy style than these surly dogs of English. But you—you are a gentleman by birth. Your name is French. You should know better than to insult me. I am not a general to your people in any event. You only know the Bourbons as the rulers of France. I was never made a general by them. If you will not call me by my title, let me be simply monsieur to you."

Gervaise smiled still more mockingly.

"You forget, general, that the title of monsieur belongs to the brother of his majesty Louis the Eighteenth."

The emperor uttered a cry of rage, wheeled his horse, and rode off again like a mad spirit of unrest, followed by the serene and imperturbable Gervaise, till they came to the road leading to Longwood, down which he dashed at the same wild, reckless speed, till he came to the gate and guard-house, where he pulled his foaming horse on its haunches and cried out sharply:

"Gavroche, here!"

An old man dressed as a groom, with the stamp of a veteran soldier on his face, ran out to take the horse; and the emperor strode into the house, where he threw his hat down on the table of the room he entered, and said, angrily:

"Bertrand, I've taken my last ride. It is infamous, this espionage! There is no quiet, no solitude, anywhere on this accursed island."

Count Bertrand looked up from his writing, and rose respectfully.

"I trust your majesty will not forget the doctor's orders," he said, gently. "We at least do not wish to lose your majesty just yet. Excitement, sire—"

The emperor waved his hand.

"I know, I know, my good Bertrand. You are right, but I cannot help it. Oh, to think that I should come to this!"

He threw himself down on a wicker chair and drummed on the table for awhile, till at last he asked:

"Any news?"

"Some visitors, sire."

The emperor frowned.

"I'll not see them."

"Very well, sire."

Another silence. The prisoner was trying to calm his nervous agitation, and his faithful follower knew that the only way to help him was to remain silent.

Presently the emperor reached over the table to a snuff-box—one of those laid for him at all places where he was in the habit of sitting long—and took a huge pinch. The titillating effect seemed to soothe him, and presently he said:

"These visitors—who are they? English?"

"Yes, sire, and one Mexican."

"A Mexican. The devil! What brings him here, Bertrand?"

"His yacht, sire."

"His yacht? He must be rich, then?"

"So I hear, sire, from the British officers."

"And why did he come here?"

"Pleasure, sire."

"Pleasure," repeated Napoleon, bitterly. "A strange place to come for pleasure."

"Your majesty forgets. To us it is a prison, but for a few days—"

"True. I thought it beautiful myself for a week, till that odious Sir Hudson came here to poison my life. Apropos, count, has the ogre paid his visit yet?"

"Yes, sire."

The emperor laughed heartily.

"And found me away. I hope I gave him a fright."

Bertrand smiled.

"He did, indeed curse in his vulgar British way, and only desisted when informed that Captain Gervaise was with you."

"You should not have told him."

"But, sire, he would—"

"I know. He would have set out after me with half the garrison. So much the better. It would plague these English. It is all we can do to get even with them for their detestable rudeness."

Bertrand said no more. The petty persecutions to which the narrow-minded Sir Hudson

constantly subjected his illustrious prisoner had tended to lower the dignity of the emperor, and he had become an adept, in his turn, at plaguing his jailers—a game in which he was sure, in the end, to be the loser.

"And is he coming again?" asked Napoleon, presently, looking up.

"No, sire, not till to-morrow."

"Then we have one day of peace."

"I hope so, sire."

"And I owe Gervaise a little. After all, he is not such a pig as Sir Hudson."

"No, sire."

"And these visitors, Bertrand?"

"Does your majesty wish the names?"

"Yes. It may serve to pass the time. The Mexican—who is he?"

"His name is the Marquis Delmont, sire, and he is said to own immense estates somewhere in America, with millions of horses and cattle."

The emperor yawned.

"A Spanish Jew, I suppose."

"No, sire, a Christian."

"Well, the others?"

"Milord Monsieur Jean Smeet of Londres is the first. He was what they call Milord Maire of London once, and now they call him Sir Smeet."

"Sare Jean Smeet, Bertrand. You do not understand these English titles like I do. I remember there was another Smeet gave me much trouble in Egypt. He was Sare Seednie Smeet. You must always put the Christian name after the Sare, my friend."

And the emperor smiled at his own learning; for English was a thing of which he knew so little that he was excessively proud of what he did possess.

"Then, sire, it is Sare Jean Smeet. Miladi Smeet, his wife, the two Mees Smeets, and Monsieur Jean Smeet, the younger, that ask an audience."

"Did you see them?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well?"

Bertrand gave a shrug.

"Comme ça, sire."

[So, so, sire.]

The emperor made a grimace.

"Very vulgar, eh?"

"Very English, sire."

The emperor laughed.

"You are too severe, Bertrand. All the English are not so vulgar. I once saw—but never mind, he was an Irishman after all. Still there was Fox. He was not vulgar. I remember seeing him at the Tuileries when I was first consul. Ah, Bertrand!"

He sighed slightly.

It was impossible for this man, lonely, racked with pain, a prisoner, to think of those brilliant years without the contrast coming home to him.

"When I was first consul," he repeated, thoughtfully, "how fresh the world was then! Head of France, at peace with all the world. God knows I wished they had let me alone. I did not open the battle till I was forced to fight in defense of the nation. England never forgave me success. And now England calls me butcher. Never mind, Bertrand; history will set us all right some day, my friend. Come, this Smeet and the other Smeets—are they all the visitors?"

He threw off his despondency like a weight, and entered into the subject of the visitors with zest.

"Are there any more?"

"No, sire."

"Then we will see the Smeets. Ah, by the by, Bertrand, you have told them the rules? I don't wish to be rude."

"I have told them, sire, that while the English government has the right to use any official title it pleases, even to insulting your majesty, who is a prisoner, no one will be admitted to your presence as a guest, unless it is understood that you are the ex-Emperor of the French, and to be addressed as 'Sire' and 'Your Majesty.'"

"That is right, Bertrand. When the English government is tenacious about the title they choose to give me, I can be equally so as to the name I shall bear in the history of the world."

Bertrand gathered up his papers, saying: "Is it your pleasure to receive the visitors here, sire?"

The emperor looked ruefully round.

"It is not the Tuileries, nor even the Luxembourg; but it will do. Yes, let them come. Apropos, do they talk any French, these Smeets and the Mexican?"

Bertrand shrugged his shoulders.

"Execrable. The Mexican's is worse than the English people's; but it is funny—his accent is not bad."

"Ah, that is because his language has similar sounds, none of those horrible English vowels, so flat, so ugly. Well, let them come. I will see them all at once and get it over quickly."

Bertrand bowed and quitted the room, while the emperor went to his dressing-room, whence he reappeared soon after, dressed in the loose, white linen garb he assumed at St. Helena, so

much more appropriate to the hot climate than his tight uniform.

A little while after, Bertrand came in, accompanied by Captain Gervaise, who officiated as a sort of cross between interpreter and spy at all interviews between the captive and visitors, on the express orders of Sir Hudson Lowe, who scented plots for escape in the air.

Gervaise performed his duty with much oily adroitness, and managed to offend the sensitive pride of the emperor less than any man who had not once been, like the interpreter, *attache* to a legation.

He introduced Sir John Smith and his lady and three children, thoroughbred city cockneys, who looked at the captive emperor as if he had been a wild beast, and uttered their opinions in whispers to each other. At least the girls did.

"Isn't he 'andsome, 'Arriet?"

"Ush! 'e'll 'ear you."

"'E only talks French."

"Well, I never see sich a girl. The captain says he talks as good as we."

The emperor heard the colloquy, but did not notice it, for Sir John was bowing before him, saying:

"Well, I'm sure, I never expected this—to see your gracious majesty in such good 'ealth. I 'eard you was quite poorly at times."

The emperor frowned slightly. He did not like references to his health.

"I 'ank you, sare; I am prett' vell," he answered; then turned to Gervaise and broke out rapidly:

"*Tonnerre de ciel, monsieur le capitaine, pourquoi m'apportez vous ce ganache? Vous voulez me tuer tout d'un coup, de ses sottises.*"

[Thunder, captain, why did you bring me this booby? Do you wish to kill me all at once with his stupidities?]

Gervaise smiled as he answered in French:

"Your majesty must have had a good experience of boobies in the past, or else you were much happier than most of the monarchs of Europe."

The emperor smiled more placably, and turned to the ex-Mayor of London, saying politely in French:

"We are both alike in one thing, monsieur. We have both been in power and are now out of it. Tell him that, captain."

The Englishman was delighted.

"Your majesty's very good to compare yourself to me. To be sure, I've 'ad my share of 'igh places. I've been sheriff and lord mayor and knight of the shire, and now I'm a goin' to India to see arter some business there. I 'ope to see your majesty as well and 'arty when I come back as now."

The emperor did not wait for the work of the translator, asking:

"You go to India, eh? You eez von vat you call directeur of dat compagnie?"

"Yes, your majesty, though I say it as shouldn't. I'm a director in the company, and 'ope to be a good deal 'igher afore I die. Well, good-mornin', your majesty. Keep up yer 'art as the sayin' is. Lord, you couldn't 'elp gettin' licked at last by the Dook. We used to 'ave a sayin', Boney can lick all of Europe, but the Dook can lick Boney. 'Ope you'll enjoy yourself till we come back, your majesty."

And Sir John backed out, grinning, and almost tumbled over Lady Smith, who was bobbing and courtesying with all her might, trying to catch the eye of the illustrious captive, who, on his part, could hardly restrain his laughter at the sight of this particularly vulgar family.

As for Gervaise, that functionary was as placid as an oyster.

He had seen too many queer people to laugh at anything odd.

Then the emperor looked bored, for he saw "Miladi Smeet" was bent on an introduction, and that the Misses and Master Smith were equally set on the same thing.

And just as he was casting over in his mind how to get rid of this torture, his eyes rested on a dark, handsome youth, whose singular costume attracted his notice as something he had never seen in all his life before.

For the stranger was a Mexican cavaliero, in all the bravery of velvet jacket and calzoneros, set with gold coins for buttons, and there was something so dashing and strikingly picturesque in his appearance that the emperor involuntarily exclaimed:

"*Eh, mon Dieu, que diable êtes vous?*"

The young man thereupon advanced with a grace and ease that contrasted forcibly with the awkward vulgarity of the Smiths and bowed low before the emperor, saying:

"*Moi—el marques—vous dites Marquis Del Monte—de la Mexique, sire.*"

[Me—el marques—you say Marquis Del Monte—of Mexico, sire.]

He spoke slowly as if trying to pick out his words from a language, yet his accent in pronouncing the few French words he used was faultless, and the emperor looked at him with much interest, asking Gervaise:

"Do not you speak Spanish among your multifarious accomplishments, captain, to translate for this gentleman?"

Gervaise shook his head.

"Unfortunately no, sire. I was at the Prus—"

sian embassy, when our people were in Spain, but I understand the marquis talks a little Italian."

Napoleon turned eagerly on Delmont.

"You speak Italian?" he asked in that tongue.

The Mexican replied rapidly:

"Yes, majesty, but it is not safe. The Marseillais patois is Greek to this Briton. I have a bunch of violets for you."

CHAPTER IX. THE YACHT.

THE Mexican had spoken in Italian of a peculiar sort, a patois in itself, which the emperor, born in Corsica, recognized as one used by the fishermen of the Gulf of Lyons, a compound of French and Italian, with many Spanish words intermingled.

With the quick intuition for which he was noted, he understood that the other must be playing a part, and the words—"I have a bunch of violets for you,"—informed him that the Mexican was a Bonapartist, come to St. Helena with a view to aiding the emperor's escape.

The violet had been the secret symbol of the escape from Elba, and had been adopted by the Bonapartists as their typical flower.

The captive emperor answered therefore, in the Marseillais patois, which is still more barbarous and unintelligible to a foreigner:

"When will you bring the flowers?"

"At night. Send one to meet me in the town. Let him have his cross on the right breast, instead of the left."

"He shall go to-night."

Here Gervaise, who had been looking puzzled and anxious, interposed:

"This will not do, general. If you compel me to resume official relations, I must declare this interview at an end."

The emperor burst out laughing.

"On my word, monsieur le capitaine, you will confer a favor on me. I thought this gentleman understood Italian, but it seems it is only some barbarous dialect that I never heard before, and I have tried him in three different patois—Neapolitan, Corsican and Piedmontese. We cannot understand each other a whit. I am sorry, for he seems to be a gentleman, but I am a little tired to-day, therefore, I will thank you to convey this party a hint in English, that I wish to be alone."

Gervaise looked much relieved at this, and hurried the visitors out of the room, when the emperor turned to Bertrand, with the low query:

"Well, did you hear?"

Bertrand, unable to conceal his joy, was pale and trembling, as he replied:

"Yes, sire. God grant he succeed. He must be a bold man. Yet he is only a boy."

The emperor began to pace the room restlessly.

"I thought this Sir Hudson was a fool when he talked of attempts at rescue," he said, slowly, "but it seems all my friends are not dead yet. This boy, who can he be? I never saw him in my life that I know. He cannot be over twenty years old."

"Boys become men soon in our day," was Bertrand's adroit reply. "I have heard that the commander of the army of Italy was but twenty-seven."

"Twenty-six, Bertrand. *Peste!* you do not know your history of France," was the pettish interruption, "and Desaix was younger than I. Poor Desaix!"

He kept up his restless walk, and in a moment more, added:

"I must send some one who will not be known. They will watch you and Montholon. This man wants to send a message to me. Whom can I trust?"

"I suggest Doctor Autoumarchi, sire. A doctor can go anywhere."

"No, no. He is too well known as a firm friend of mine. Gavroche must go."

"The groom, sire?"

"Yes."

"But he has not the brains to carry on an intrigue of this sort."

"He can carry a message, and that is all that is necessary. Send for him openly. Tell him, in the presence of the guard, that I wish to scold him about my horse to-day. I will soon see if he has any wit. We must creep if we cannot walk, Bertrand."

Bertrand bowed, and was about to leave the room when they heard a knock at the door, and the emperor's valet entered, and said:

"Please, your majesty, Gavroche, the groom, wished me to inform you that the gray horse is sick from his gallop to-day and he wishes to ask if you have any objection to using the bay to-morrow or this evening."

The emperor glanced at Bertrand.

The room door was wide open and they could see the form of the English sentry on the veranda, pacing to and fro, while Captain Gervaise was seated in a wicker chair near the doorway, so as to hear everything.

The emperor put on an appearance of great anger, and began to scold the valet violently.

"Gavroche is a fool, and you another. How dare he send such a silly message? It is time he learned his duties better. Send him to me at

once. Tell him I am angry at his stupidity. Do you hear what I say, do!"

The valet bowed obsequiously.

"I will tell him, sire."

Then he went out, and the emperor whispered to Bertrand:

"I told you he was no fool. I know how to pick my men. He has something to say to me. Ah, these English, they are no match in brains for the Gaul."

The door remained open, and they saw the form of Gavroche come up the steps and stand humbly before Gervaise at a salute.

Gavroche was an old cavalry soldier, who had been invalided since the battle of Leipsic, and had obtained leave to go to St. Helena as Napoleon's groom.

Gervaise looked at him coldly.

"Well, soldier?"

"I am no soldier, please, captain."

"Well, groom, what do you want?"

"To see his majesty, captain."

"You mean General Bonaparte, the prisoner, I suppose."

"I mean his majesty, Napoleon by the voice of the French people crowned emperor."

"Humph! yes, and beaten at Waterloo."

"Yes, captain, by two armies together, after the English were running."

Gervaise colored slightly.

"Thou'rt an impudent rascal," he said sharply.

"If the general cannot teach thee manners, Sir Hudson shall. What dost thou want?"

"To see the prisoner. He has sent for me, captain."

Gavroche adopted "the prisoner" as a safe title, on which both could agree, and Gervaise said, sullenly:

"Well, go in. Tell him that if he cannot teach thee respect to the officer on duty, I'll see another man put in thy place. Go in."

Gavroche saluted with the same stiff imperturbability, vailing sarcasm, that he had shown all through the interview, and marched in, where he stood bolt upright before the emperor, saying:

"Your majesty sent for me, Mathieu tells me, about the gray horse. Indeed, sire, I am not to blame, and if—"

"Silence!" cried the emperor angrily. "Since when do my grooms speak before they are spoken to?"

Gavroche, while the emperor was scolding, put his fingers into the lining of his cap, which he held before him and adroitly extricated therefrom a little white note, which he held up before him, as he answered boldly:

"Since your majesty began to blame us for nothing, I, for my part, am tired of this dog's life in St. Helena, and if the English will permit, I shall leave your service to-morrow."

"*Prenez lui.*"

[Take it.]

He muttered the last words under his breath, as the emperor advanced on him, shouting fiercely.

"Rascal! Impudent villain! Do you also dare insult me? Take that!"

And with the word he struck the old soldier with his open hand on the breast, snatching away the note and continuing violently:

"So you wish to leave my service, do you? You shall do it at once, insolent ingrate, disgrace to France! Here, Bertrand, see that this villain is paid to-morrow, and that I never see his face again."

Gervaise had risen, and was looking into the room with an expression of scornful amusement that showed how the scene pleased him, and Gavroche, who had his back turned to the Englishman, had a broad grin on his face, as he whispered:

"I am a Gascon, sire."

Then he stepped back with a slight halt and stagger, and shook his fist at the emperor, crying:

"Aha, it is well, I have been a faithful soldier and blows are my reward. I will go back to France, I will—yes. I will enter the king's service. The old kings of France don't strike their old servants."

"Because they're afraid," he added in a low voice, with a grin of appreciation at the part he was playing.

Then he whispered:

"Put me out, sire, put me out."

With that he burst into loud cries as if he were more than half drunk, and the emperor seized him by both shoulders and shook him violently, shouting:

"Ah, rascal, I see. Thou art drunk as an owl. Go! Be off! Hola, Captain Gervaise, how dare you let this villain in to insult me?"

And so ran him off the veranda, the English sentry openly laughing at what he thought an unseemly exhibition of passion, while Gervaise stood with a slight smile on his face, as the emperor turned back into his room and slammed the door violently as if enraged beyond patience.

Nevertheless, the face of the captive wore a triumphant smile as the door closed, and he said to Bertrand:

"Take the note and read it. I must not be seen with it. Tell me its contents when we are unobserved, and burn it."

Bertrand nodded and hid the note in his pocket, when the emperor threw open the door again, and began a tirade of reproaches to Gervaise for not seeing, as Gavroche came in, that the man was drunk.

Under the cover of this noise, Bertrand left the room to read the little note, which he found contained these words:

"At the end of the garden of Longwood is a thicket at the edge of the precipice. There is no sentry there, but I can ascend at night. I will meet any emissary you send to the summer house, an hour after taps are beaten in the English garrison."

"DELMONT."

Bertrand read it over two or three times, and destroyed it carefully.

He knew the spot well.

The garden of Longwood at that point ended in a sheer precipice of two hundred feet, from whence a steep bank went down four or five hundred more to a ravine, that led ultimately to the sea, separated from the town of Jamestown by a ridge.

At this point, which commanded a view of the harbor and some fifty miles of sea, was built a small summer house, a favorite resort of the emperor in the evening twilight, and about the only spot on the island where no sentry was deemed necessary.

It looked out on the harbor and was commanded, on the opposite side of a valley of which the point formed the southern spur, by a little telegraph post.

It was not deemed possible that any danger existed in the precipice at the side of the summer house, so that Sir Hudson had failed to station a sentry at its foot.

Bertrand went back to his master, whom he found reading in his private study, and communicated to him the purport of the singular missive.

The emperor listened, and observed:

"The man is bold, but how is he to climb the precipice?"

Bertrand shrugged his shoulders.

"That is his affair. All he asks of us is to go to the summer house."

"I see. Well, I will go."

"If I may presume, sire—"

"You may. Go on."

"I should say do not go."

"Ah! why not?"

"It may be a trick."

"Of whom?"

"Of Sir Hudson."

"Perhaps. I have thought of it."

"And if your majesty goes—"

"They may follow and make it a pretext for further insults. You are right, count."

"But if I go, sire—"

"It will be the same thing. You are not a prisoner, but are free to depart and go where you wish."

"Exactly, sire. Therefore—"

"You are the person to go there."

The emperor turned over the leaves of his book absently, and presently said:

"By the by, we can use Gavroche in the matter, as an intermediary."

Bertrand looked puzzled, and the other smiled as he said playfully:

"Ah, Bertrand, you are a simpleton, after all. Talleyrand would have seen that in a moment. Gavroche was drunk to-day and goes into town on a frolic. He is sorry to-morrow, and comes back, begging to be taken and forgiven."

"Yes, sire—"

"Yes, sire! Don't you see that I am of a forgiving nature, but not too forgiving, while you are a peacemaker. It will take a good week of intercession before I forgive this rascal, and in the mean time he is going and coming. By the by, where is this Mexican's yacht? Have you seen it yet?"

"No, sire."

"It is time you did. Report to me when you come back. I am going to sleep."

And before Bertrand had left the room the emperor's eyes were closed, and he was dozing in his chair.

The general, who occupied the position of chief of the emperor's household, was so used to going about freely on the island that his movements excited no comment. The English, indeed, with the sole exception of Sir Hudson Lowe, looked upon the idea of a serious attempt at rescue of their illustrious captive as chimerical.

Set in the midst of an ocean, patrolled by two frigates all the time, not a sail could approach within a hundred miles without being hailed by one of the vigilant watchers, and so far no suspicious visitors had been seen evading the emperor's guardians.

The complaints of the captive as to his harsh treatment were in fact generally sympathized with among the officers of the garrison, who looked on Sir Hudson Lowe with the more dislike that he had never seen any active service, but was a peace martinet in his record.

Count Bertrand therefore rode down to the port without attracting any notice, and took a survey of all the ships in the harbor, among which he soon perceived a craft that he made up his mind must be the object of his search.

She lay astern of a huge Indiaman that was just loosening her topsails to go to sea, while the rubicund faces of Sir John and Miladi Smith looked over the big ship's quarter at the little one, which was a yacht.

But a yacht of no kind known in Europe, though Bertrand had seen the rig often enough in the Mediterranean.

The strange yacht was a felucca, with the long, tapering yards of a Nile *dahabiah*, though her hull was that of a civilized yacht in form. Not in color, however.

She was painted blue, scarlet, green, gold and purple, in the oddest and most fantastic style imaginable, while one of her sails, which was hanging loose to dry, was striped in the patterns only seen in Venice.

The count was no sailor, but he had seen enough of the ocean on the voyage from France to make him smile at the fantastically decorated vessel, so gaudy and un-sailor-like, when he heard some one behind him say in English:

"Well, by crickey! blest if that ain't the rummiest craft I ever seen in all my born days outside of Alexandry. D'ye twig the Don in the 'amock grand as a prince, Jim? Wouldn't I like to cut 'im down by the 'ead, jest once, to see 'im look like a fool."

Bertrand looked round and beheld two British tars from one of the men-of-war in the harbor, staring at the yacht.

So he asked:

"Vat is dat sheep, *mon ame*? De leetle von, all paint so beautiful?"

The sailor winked at his comrade and took a chew of his tobacco before answering:

"That 'ere? That 'ere ain't a sheep at all, Frenchy. It's a *flooker*, as they calls 'em in the Mediterrany."

"Vell, vell, dat felucca—vat is she?"

"To my thinkin' she's the 'ome of a bloomin' loonattick," was the candid reply of Jack. "She h'istes the flag of Spain when she flies anythin', and the feller as owns her sleeps on a gold bed and eats outer di'mon' spoons, so they say."

"Ah, den et is de sheep of dat Mexicain dey call Delmont—is it so, *mon ami*?"

"Blest if I know, mounseer. 'E's a bloomin' play-actor in my opinion. 'Oo ever seen a feller goin' round in such toggerly 'mong Christian people?"

The two sailors simultaneously spat on the ground in their disgust, and walked off, leaving Bertrand to gaze at the yacht.

Gorgeousness to the extent of ostentation was visible in every detail of this singular ship, where money seemed to have been flung about in the most reckless manner. Over the quarter-deck stretched an awning made of expensive silk, fringed with gold tassels, and supported on silver rods, while every bit of metal visible, usually made of brass, had the same white gloss, indicating its value.

Under the awning, in a grass hammock, then a thing unknown in Europe, lay the figure of the Mexican that Bertrand had seen in the morning, in the same dress of black velvet, with a *manga* of purple silk thrown over the edge of the hammock, while the young man smoked a cigarette.

The count was too far off to read the name of the yacht under its stern, but seeing a midshipman coming by, he asked him:

"Sare, veel you tell me ze name of dat leetle sheep—paint so drole?"

"She's a Spaniard, monsieur; belongs to a rich Mexican, Don Alberto Delmont, rich as a Jew and a splendid fellow. He's asked all the officers to a big dinner to-morrow. Sir Hudson's going to call on him, I hear. The name? Oh, yes. Blest if I know what it is in English, but it spells—let me see—Muchachito—do you know what it is, monsieur?"

"It is leetle boy, you say in English, *mon ami*. Thank you."

Then the count rode away thinking:

"Who is this Mexican, and why is he here? What interest has a Mexican in liberating our emperor?"

So he rode round the port to a place where he was within less than a cable length of the felucca, and could see her more plainly. Then he became aware that under her bow was a figure-head in the shape of a child, beautifully cut and painted the size of life.

Bertrand looked at it closely and could not restrain a start, muttering:

"*Mon Dieu!* it is the King of Rome!"

It was the portrait of Napoleon's child.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUMMER HOUSE.

THAT evening, as the sun was setting, Count Bertrand asked permission of the emperor to be absent for a few hours, saying he felt unwell, and had been too closely confined over his writing—the after-celebrated "Memories of St. Helena."

He spoke in the presence of Captain Gervaise, and the emperor, with a show of displeasure, consented, saying:

"You all want to escape from me."

The count bowed in his usual quiet way and left the house, when he lighted a cigar and strolled in the garden awhile, in full sight of

the sentries, then edged off in the shrubbery till he reached the summer house, into which he entered unseen, even from the telegraph station opposite, by keeping behind the shelter of the posts and sitting down on the floor as he entered.

This summer house was built on a point of the plateau on which the old house of Longwood was situated.

St. Helena is traversed by several such ridges, forming valleys of various sizes, sloping to the sea.

On the north side of Longwood, they were merged into a slope which ran down to Jamestown, the camp of the Fifty-third English regiment lying between the house and the town.

On the other side of Longwood was the rocky road leading to Diana's Point, whither the captive had ridden alone that morning.

On the side opposite Jamestown, the bluffs fell away in sheer precipices into the lonely valley in which the emperor's grave was subsequently made. Down this valley ran a tiny rivulet into a little bay about three miles below, and at the head of this bay was a guard-house, occupied by soldiers.

The prisoner could not go far in any direction without running on a British sentry.

The other side of the valley was not so steep as that toward Longwood, and had, on a slope of a hill, a cottage, occupied by an old maid, called Miss Mason, whose curiosity made her the emperor's pet aversion.

Bertrand gained his post unseen from the telegraph station, and a screen of bushes shielded him from Miss Mason's prying, as he soon ascertained, for he had brought a strong glass with him and could distinctly see that lady at her knitting on her veranda.

By cautious maneuvering he got a sight of the telegraph station—one of the semaphore institutions, then new—and saw that the operator was smoking a pipe, in conversation with a soldier on duty there.

He waited till the sun went down and the short twilight of the tropics was over, when he hid himself in the bushes near the summer house and waited patiently.

He knew that Captain Gervaise made a point of inspecting the summer house with a lantern every night, and sure enough, that officer soon after made his appearance with a brother officer, took a seat in the building and entered into conversation.

"Well, Hal," said the captain, "I don't know what you think, but I'm tired of this jailer business. How long is it to last, I wonder?"

"Till old Boney dies or escapes," said the other, indifferently. "It's a beastly hole, to be sure, and he can't last long; but then, you know, it wouldn't do to let him go. He's turned Europe upside down too often."

Gervaise gave a growl.

"I'm hanged if I'm not sick of it, Hal. I have to do all Sir Hudson's dirty work, and I swear I feel ashamed of it. Do you know, it's like sticking needles into a lion when he's trapped. Sometimes I wish he would escape to give us all a fair chance of a battle to take him again."

The other yawned.

"You're too confounded sentimental. It all comes of reading so much French. I'm thankful I don't speak a word of the language beyond a *sacre* and *peste*. I can swear in five languages, but that's the furthest I ever got. Have a weed, Redge?"

Reginald Gervaise nodded, and they both lighted cigars and began to smoke, while Bertrand lay within twenty feet, listening to them and cursing them in his heart for not going away.

Presently the one called Hal said:

"By the by, Gervaise, are you going to that Mexican fellow's spread?"

"No, why should I? Confounded vulgar cad! What do I want of him?"

"Well, old Lowe's going, and all the garrison, and the navy men they say too. He's ordered supper at a guinea a head, and they say his yacht's fairly loaded down with champagne. I'm sure we can't refuse to help him to drink it, in charity to the poor devil."

"Pshaw," said Gervaise. "I don't like champagne in this climate. What the deuce brings the fellow here anyway?"

"Curiosity. I hear he's going round the world, and is to write a book. Of course no book's complete nowadays without Boney in it. He seems to be a deuced hospitable fellow though, but he talks worse English than Boney, and that's saying a good deal."

"Well, I shall not go, for the best of all reasons."

"And what's that?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Why not! You don't suppose Sir Hudson is going to take off all the guards that night, while the garrison is getting drunk? I have the pleasure to be on what is called a perpetual detail. I'm never off duty."

"Well, that's nothing. You could get one of the subs to take your turn for one night. Champagne's bed for youngsters."

"Yes, and find my man gone next day."

"Oh, nonsense, Gervaise."

"You think so?"

"Of course I do. Here I've been two years on this island and never an attempt at escape made yet, barring that Yankee schooner that they suspected and drove off so roughly."

"Two years, you've been here you say?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Then you never heard Wright's story?"

"Wright's story? What, the old fellow in command of the Penelope, who hates Boney so badly? No. Didn't know he had a story."

"It's nearly forgotten now, but it's well worth hearing."

"Tell it then. I've nothing to do but finish this cigar which by the by is not a bad one. Got it from old Smith, that snob who went out in the Hyder Ali this afternoon. Old boy asked me to call if ever I got to Calcutta. Might do worse. Girls got a cool forty thousand each, eh?"

"Yes," returned Gervaise sarcastically, "and a father-in-law thrown in. He'd look nice in your mother's drawing-room, Egerton, wouldn't he?"

Bertrand knew the voice of the second man now. It was Harry Egerton, junior captain of the 53d, a lady-killer of good family, but impecunious.

Egerton laughed awkwardly.

"Hang it, man, forty thousand pounds covers a multitude of—"

"H's lying around loose, you mean. I fancy I hear the old cad saying 'Lady Arriet, I'm 'appy to see you in my 'ouse and 'ope you'll 'ave a 'arty good time of it, as you 'ave a 'arty welcome, I'm sure, bless your old 'art.'"

"Oh, cut that!" cried Egerton angrily. "Go on with Wright's story. What is it?"

Gervaise puffed at his cigar.

"Well, it's a long time ago, before you came here, in fact."

"How long?"

"Nearly a year."

"What's it all about?"

"Boney, of course."

"Well then, tell it and don't let me ask so many questions."

"All right. I suppose you know what makes Wright so bitter on Boney?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, you see he got taken prisoner in 1804, I think it was, at the end of the peace when the French snapped up so many English travelers. They let the citizens go, but they kept Wright, because he was a naval officer."

"Pretty shabby trick."

"So he thought, and when they kept him twenty years in the Temple, every one else thought so too. But I say it made old Wright's fortune."

"How so?"

"Well, he was a poor man when he went in a junior lieutenant, low on the list, with no influence, no money, no anything."

"Pretty common complaint, Redge."

"But when he came out he was not only first on the list, but found that his case had excited sympathy, and that he had been made commander while he lay in prison, and had gone to the head of that list, too, while twenty years' pay had been accumulating for him at compound interest. Parliament took hold of it, and, by Jove, sir, he tumbled right into a tub of grease, for they posted him and gave him the crack frigate of the British navy, with leave to apply for his own duty. And what does that devil of vindictiveness do, but apply to come here and play policeman."

"Wanted to wreak his spite, eh?"

"Yes. Well. He was very near not getting here at all."

"How was that?"

"He sailed from England all right, but ran into a collier in a fog off Havre, and got damaged so he had to go into the French port for repairs. When he came out he was followed by a French lugger, painted white, that must have had a very devil for a captain—or a Yankee."

"How was that?"

"Well, sir, this little lugger actually fired into him in the Channel, and again out at sea, though she wasn't a third of his size. But she had one gun aboard—a thirty-two—that carried further than any in the frigate, and she sailed like the very devil or a Baltimore clipper. At last they met near the West Indies, in a dead calm, and had their spite out for a whole day."

"Well, who licked? Wright, of course, or he wouldn't be here."

"Yes, Wright licked at last, but at a cost that would have taken away any other man's commission."

"Indeed."

"Yes. I'll tell you how it was. First he sent out his boats to take her, and she sunk them all."

"Well done, Frenchy."

"You may say that. Wright told me that he never saw such gunnery in his life. At last he'd only one boat left and the lugger got on his quarter and hung there, plugging thirty-two-pound shot into him between wind and water, so that he thought he must sink if it kept up any longer. And so he struck his flag, as his guns would not carry as far as the lugger."

"Struck his flag!"

"Yes, and saved his bacon, but at a cost I should not like to have paid."

"Well, Redge?"

"Well. The lugger stopped firing, and sent a boat to take possession."

"A boat! What for?"

"Why, she evidently feared a ruse, and knew that if she once came within range of the frigate's broadside, one round would sink her."

"I see."

"So did old Wright, and what do you think he did?"

"Don't know. Blew her up?"

"Shal no!"

"Well, give it up. Tell us."

"He set his men to pumping like mad, and hoisted his flag again, *Union down*. What I call a regular cursed pirate's trick, unworthy a gentleman."

"Why?"

"Don't you see? It was a signal of distress to decoy the lugger near and make her people think he was in a sinking condition. Anyhow, the bait took, and she came up with her sweeps, and the French flag flying, while Wright sent his boat—the only one he had left—out with a white flag and a man who could speak French, to yell for help. The lugger came within two cables' length, when he called the men from the pumps and opened fire on her with twenty guns that he had been pointing on the sly while he was pretending distress. That lugger went down in less than five minutes, with every soul on board but two."

Egerton uttered an exclamation of wonder and disgust.

"Well, by Jove. Didn't he try to save the poor devils?"

"No. On the contrary, he fired at them in the water."

"And the two who got off?"

"They were picked up by an officer of the Penelope, who had more humanity than the brute Wright."

"Who were they?"

"A boy of twenty, who wouldn't give his name, and a big one-eyed fellow, who was equally sulky."

"And what did Wright do with them?"

"Ordered them hung as pirates, after he'd repaired damages."

"Pirates! but they were French."

"Yes, but the war was over, and they flew the old tricolor. Anyhow they made no complaint, and would have been strung up next morning but for one little fact, which shows they must have been desperate quick-witted men."

"Ah, they made their escape?"

"Yes, but how?"

"That's for you to tell."

"Well, the Penelope had but one boat, and they had left that towing from the stern, being in a dead calm."

"And they stole it, of course."

"Yes, but how did they do it? They were double-ironed, with a marine sentry over the door, and they down in the ship's hold."

"Oh don't ask riddles. Tell me."

"Well, first of all they asked the sentry for some water."

"Well?"

"And he, like a fool, laid down his musket and knelt down to give the old one-eyed man a drink."

"Well?"

"Well, that was the last of him."

"How?"

"They found him next morning dead, with a hole in the back of his head."

"Who did it?"

"The young one, with his irons."

"But how did they find it out?"

"He left a letter for Wright, kindly detailing the manner of his escape, and the captain found it on the sill of his cabin window next morning, when he also found the birds had flown."

"And what did the letter say?"

"Told him that no one had helped them to escape, but that two French soldiers of the Old Guard were a match for any ship's company of Englishmen, and all that sort of brag, you know. But what made Wright savage was a postscript."

"What was in it?"

"He never would tell me, but his first luff, Charley Duncomb, did. The postscript called Wright a coward, and told him that the writer would yet have the pleasure of sinking his ship and killing himself. It told him none but a dastard would have used the pity of brave men to lure them to their destruction, and that the time would come when he—Wright—should swing at the yard-arm as a pirate."

"By Jove! That was severe."

"Yes. Duncomb told me the old man ripped and swore worse than twenty pirates, but it was no use. The only boat was gone. There was not a breath of air to move the ship, and they never saw the two men again."

"By Jove!"

That was the truly British comment of Egerton, as he got up and shook the ashes off his cigar.

"Good-night Redge."

"Good-night, Edge."

And the speakers vanished, while the concealed Frenchman uttered a low sigh of relief and stretched himself. He had heard the story and understood part of it, but it interested him little. He was thinking of his expected visitor, and was wondering how he was going to come to the summer house.

It was an hour after "taps," and the lights in the telegraph stations and houses shone like stars, while the sky was covered with mists which were condensed on the lofty rocks of Point Diana.

Below him, on the side toward Miss Mason's lay a black gulf, into which he looked, and up which, if any way, his visitor was to come.

The clock of the little church in Jamestown struck ten as he looked, and he heard the long-drawn cry of the sentries:

"Ten o'clock, and a-a-ll's well!"

And just then, down in the black gulf below, he saw a flash, repeated three times. Fireflies were flitting in the shrubbery and valley, but this was not a firefly. The light was red, not green; and he heard the faint "tick! tick!" of a flint and steel. The count carried one himself, being a smoker, and in a moment he had it out and made a similar signal over the edge of the precipice, when he heard below, a voice, calling out:

"A l'echelle! a l'echelle!"

[To the ladder.]

The words were spoken in a hoarse whisper, as if the speaker were holding his face against the rock and trying to make it carry up his voice.

Then the tapping began again, and the puzzled count said to himself:

"The ladder? What ladder?"

Then it suddenly occurred to him that the tapping must have some connection with the ladder.

So he felt about in the turf above the place whence the flashes proceeded, and presently felt a wire lying in the grass, which seemed to be hanging over the edge of the precipice, and yet fastened to something behind him. Tracing it along, he found it tied to one of the posts of the summer house, and its use flashed on him.

It was left there by some one to haul up a ladder with.

As soon as this idea dawned on him he commenced pulling it, and speedily found that he was right.

A ladder was indeed there, hanging to the end of the thin wire rope, and at the end of the ladder were two grappling hooks which he thrust securely into the soil, supporting them on roots, before he looked over again and whispered:

"St! St!"

The waiter below made no audible reply, but shook the ladder twice, and Bertrand felt that he was ascending. In five minutes more a dark head came over the edge, and a voice whispered in French:

"Silence! Come into the summer house, and lie down. There is a patrol up the valley, and I nearly ran on it."

They crawled into the summer house and Bertrand whispered:

"Show your face, I want to know you."

The other struck out a flash revealing the dark bearded face of a man with only one eye.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLOT.

THE darkness descended again over the summer-house, and the stranger said, in the same cautious way:

"You have seen my face. Do you know me? I think not."

"No," returned Bertrand, frankly. "I expected some one else."

"The captain? Yes; but he is busy. It takes more than one to accomplish a thing of this sort."

"And what is it you propose then?"

"To carry off the emperor."

"It cannot be done, or it would have been done before."

"It has never been done rightly before."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"And how do you propose to do it?"

"Simply that his majesty shall come here to-morrow night. If he can descend the ladder, I will answer for the rest."

Bertrand sighed.

"It is impossible. You do not know that there is a guard-house at the end of this valley below."

"On the contrary, I do."

"And what do you propose?"

"To paralyze every soldier in it."

"You mean to kill them. In that case, I warn you—the emperor will not consent. He could have escaped from Rochelle, but he would not consent to the sacrifice of a single life to secure his personal liberty."

The one-eyed man laughed.

"Very well; they can be silenced in other ways. Englishmen love brandy. I can only repeat this: if his majesty will come here to-morrow night and go down the ladder up which I have just come, I will engage to have him at

sea within two hours and in safety before morning."

Bertrand hesitated.

"But who are you?"

"I was a soldier in the Artillery of the Guard. My comrade commanded the firing party that shot Marshal Ney. The dead marshal left him a legacy to be spent in rescuing the emperor. He accepted the trust. We sailed from Havre five years ago, but had bad luck. It has taken us four years to get ready; but now we are ready. In the yacht in the harbor lies a sum of nearly two hundred millions of francs, which belongs to his majesty. If he will come with us, we can again make him head of France. All we ask is that he come here and descend this ladder."

Bertrand listened, and the story told by the British officer came back to him.

He asked, therefore:

"Were you in the lugger that fought the British frigate, Penelope?"

The other ground his teeth audibly.

"We were. Curses on the coward that fooled us! But his turn will come before long."

Bertrand laid his hand on his arm.

"Comrade, I can only say this: I will tell his majesty your proposal, but I fear he will not consent."

"But why not, monsieur?"

The tones of the man were imploring.

"It can certainly be done. It may not even cost a single life. If it does—well, they are only English."

"I have told you already that the emperor will not consent to the sacrifice of life to secure his individual liberty. A battle for France is one thing; this is another."

The one-eyed man heaved a sigh.

"It is too bad. There is no danger. We have laid our plans so well. See here, monsieur, I don't know you—"

"I am Count Bertrand, grand marshal of the household. What is your name?"

"Jean Martin, monsieur—simple sailor. But let me tell you what we have done, before you decide against us."

"Proceed, Jean."

The count's tones were cold. He did not like the whole business, which savored to him of a desperate scheme, likely to result in failure.

Martin laid his hand on the count's arm.

"Monsieur, I am not a learned man like the captain; I find it hard to explain. But I will do my best. See here. We two, four years ago, were alone in a boat on the ocean. We had nothing but a memory, not even food. We swore then, in the sight of the God who spread the blue heavens above us, to save his majesty from this prison, if it took all our lives. God heard us, and we were saved. A ship picked us up—a Spaniard bound to Mexico. We were taken to Vera Cruz, and remained there until we had learned Spanish. Then it was necessary to find the treasure of which the marshal's legacy had told us. That took us two years' constant work, during which we passed as fishermen. Then we had to procure a vessel to come here in which we could defy pursuit, and none such was to be found in Mexico. We had to go to the United States, to Baltimore, where they build the swiftest ships in the world, and that took us a year more. Our comrades were all dead, and we had to find a crew on whom we could depend. At last we did it. We have men from half the lands in the world, every one of whom is a hero. We have concealed our identity as sons of France and defy suspicion. Our captain will to-morrow be hobnobbing with the Governor of St. Helena, and the officers of the garrison and navy will be drunk. We have arranged everything for our scheme. Now are we to go back and let what we have done pass for a mere nothing?"

"No," said Bertrand, moved by the recital of the other, "but I have told you that I can only report to his majesty. He must be the judge whether he consent to the enterprise or not. How did you get that rope ladder here?"

One Eye laughed shortly.

"I am a Gascon, monsieur, and you have my old townsman Gavroche here. He is a sharp one, and threw over the wire. You must not leave it tied to the post of the summer house to-morrow, or it will be seen. It was well enough to-night, for Pierre took care to place it after the English officer had gone away. To-morrow you must let it hang from one of the roots of the edge of the bank. It is invisible from the valley, and the ladder is in a hole. I shall be in waiting at taps, and you will flash three sparks over the summit, to which I answer by one. The patrol will not trouble us to-morrow night. Now, monsieur, adieu. We shall be ready to-morrow night. If his majesty consents to come, we have prepared all. If not, we have done our best."

"Stay," said Bertrand as the other rose to go. "We may arrange some signal for the day, in case his majesty decides to come to the summer house."

"Very good, monsieur. Let the emperor ride out toward Jamestown."

"That is forbidden."

"Peste! that is unlucky."

"True. He is not allowed near the coast."

"I have it, then, monsieur. This island is full of blacks. Let one be sent with a message."

"Equally impossible."

"Why, monsieur?"

"The emperor is not allowed to talk to the slaves for fear of exciting an insurrection."

"Accursed English! But we will outwit them. Let his majesty ride out in any direction, if he wishes to escape. If he determines not to try the plan, let him remain at home for the day."

"His majesty has determined to ride no more for the present."

"Peste, monsieur, you meet me at every turn. Am I to understand his majesty is determined not to escape?"

"You are not to understand any such thing, comrade. But I will set the signal myself. If you see me in Jamestown to-morrow, and I do not notice you in the least, we shall go."

"But I am not to be there, monsieur. My place will be here. The captain is to do the Jamestown business; I am to manage the escape."

"And the yacht, where is she to be?"

"She is to slip out to sea as soon as it is dark and be off the guard-house. We have a canoe hidden in the valley."

"And your captain?"

"What of him, monsieur?"

"How is he to get off?"

Martin chuckled.

"Leave the captain alone. He knows what he is about. Conceive, if you can, monsieur, a youth not yet twenty-five, who can sail a ship better than I, an old sailor; fences like St. George, commands a battery like the little corporal himself, and has learned it all for no purpose but to save the emperor. Good-night, monsieur. I see we can arrange no signal."

"Stay. Yes, we can. If we conclude to go, his majesty will come to this summer house at noon, and cast a stone into the valley, as if for sport."

"That will do, monsieur. I shall be on the veranda at Mees Mason's. She and I are great friends already. I have been on this island six months, preparing for this business. Good-night. Remember to throw down the ladder and hang the rope to a root at the edge of the bank, as soon as you see the flash of my flint."

He threw himself flat on the ground, and went over the edge of the precipice, while Bertrand remained watching.

Presently came the ticking of the steel, and the count threw over the ladder, fastened the wire rope in the shrubbery in a way he felt confident would secure it from detection, and then went back to the house.

He strolled quietly in past the sentry, who looked at him suspiciously, but said nothing, and then went into the house. He saw a light in the emperor's library, where his majesty was accustomed to stop frequently late at nights dictating the "memoirs" alternately to Gourmand, Montholon or Bertrand, as one or the other was able to stand the work.

The count knocked at the door, and found Napoleon pacing up and down the little library, dictating the account of the campaign of Egypt.

He nodded slightly as Bertrand entered, and went on as usual till he had ended the battle of the Pyramids, when he abruptly halted.

"That will do to-night, Montholon. We have something to hear from the Grand Marshal of the Palace. Well, count, have you seen any one—for example, this gay young man in the velvet coat?"

"No, sire, but I have seen some one else."

"Ah! whom?"

"I will tell you, sire, when I am sure we have no listeners."

The emperor nodded.

It was known that Sir Hudson Lowe had given orders to watch the movements of all the Frenchmen closely, and report any suspicious conversations, and the spies round the emperor were none too proud to listen at doors.

Count Montholon rose, saying:

"In that case I must go on duty, sire, while Bertrand and you converse."

So saying, the faithful secretary went out of the room and patrolled the veranda and passages to ascertain if any one was listening, while Bertrand told the emperor the story of his singular interview.

Napoleon listened attentively to all the other said, and then observed:

"The plan is a good one, and might easily succeed. At twenty-five I would have taken it up myself; but things have happened since then. At twenty-five I was only a general, and no one cared what became of me. Now I am fifty, and all the world is watching me. I must think. Good-night."

He dismissed Bertrand with an abrupt wave of the hand and went to his room, while quiet settled over the grounds of Longwood, and even the English dozed on their beats in the absence of any excitement in their monotonous rounds of duties.

The night wore on in the sultry heat of the tropics, while the mists gathered round Diana's peak and brooded above the gloomy island, and

when morning dawned the fifes and drums of the 53d regiment woke the echoes with their cheerful reveille, and Captain Gervaise yawned as he got out of bed, saying:

"Confound this jail duty. I shall apply for an exchange. I'm sick of it."

Captain Gervaise was not the only person sick of it, and every one welcomed a change in the monotony which was to be furnished that day by the entertainment of the Marquis Delmont.

It had been the talk of Jamestown for three days, during which the splendid but extravagantly adorned yacht had been the cynosure of wondering eyes, while more than one visitor had come back with amazing reports of the splendor and lavish hospitality of the gorgeous Mexican.

He had entertained every one in regal style, and insisted on conversing in English, which was said to be bad, while he understood no French at all, so that, had it not been for one or two officers of the 53rd who had learned Spanish in the Peninsular war the Don would have had no one to converse with in his own tongue.

But if he talked bad English, he knew how to entertain, and had bought up all the canvas and duck in Jamestown to erect an enormous tent or marquee in which tables were to be spread that evening for three hundred officers of the army and navy, who were to be entertained by this lavish Mexican.

Even Gervaise who had expressed so much contempt for the occasion, found himself carried away in the course of the day by the accounts he heard of the splendors in preparation, and went down to the port to see the gaudy vessel that contained the millionaire.

He found, lying at the steps from the quay, a six-oared barge, with velvet cushions, in which stood a polite negro, dressed in the Mexican style, who bowed as soon as he saw the captain saying:

"You wish see el marques—*Adelante, señor*—steppa een, dat eez. Don Alberto s'all be 'appee see you."

"But I don't know the Don," said Gervaise.

"No importa señor—dat is all same. 'E 'appee see you. Steppa een."

And just at that moment Captain Harry Egerton came down, saying:

"Get in, Redge. The Don means it. He's keeping open house to-day, I hear. I'm going, hit or miss."

So Gervaise half unwillingly went into the barge, and was rowed to the gorgeous yacht, where he was met at the gangway and welcomed with the most grandiloquent courtesy by the swartly young Apollo whom he had seen the day before, who said:

"Aha, it is el capitano, dat guard de prisoners. Sure, you are welcome. I s'all do myself plaisir to see you."

Gervaise answered as politely as he could, and was shown to a seat on the quarter-deck, where two or three little black boys in Turkish dresses served coffee and cigarettes, and then entered into desultory conversation, the Don showing a good deal of curiosity about the habits of the emperor, and asking so many questions that Gervaise at last said, rather coldly:

"I don't know if my duty allows me to answer, señor. May I ask the reason of these questions?"

"My dear sare, certainly," said the other with a fascinating smile. "I write a leetle book some day. *Las Aventuras de un caballero Mejicano para todo el mundo*—dat eez de a'ventures of a gentleman Mexican, troo all de world. I must say something as to de *imperator* in his prezon—de emperor—"

"We don't give him that title," said the other dryly. "To us and Europe he is only General Bonaparte."

The marquis gave a polite shrug.

"As you veel. But dey would not know vat I mean in Mexique, if I say dat. Dey call him *imperator*. I s'ould like ver' mosh to see heem again, so I can take eez picture in my 'ead."

"Can't be done," said Gervaise shortly. "Sir Hudson won't allow it. And was it only curiosity drew you here, marquis?"

"Curiositee and *El Muchachito*—de felucca. You like her, señor?"

"Pretty well," was the indifferent reply. "Too much color to our English taste."

"Ah, dat is education. In de tropique of ma native land we love de bright color, señor. Ah, vat dat you vas look at?"

He was facing Gervaise, who was looking over his shoulder out to sea, with the air of a man who saw something interesting.

"The Penelope's coming in," was the reply of Gervaise. "I wonder what's the matter?"

The Mexican turned and looked out to the mouth of the harbor, where a handsome frigate was seen coming into the basin under a cloud of sail, which she was slowly taking in as she came near the anchorage.

"De Penelope?" he said, inquiringly. "Vat is dat, señor?"

"One of the patrol frigates, marquis. Her captain is Wright, the man who hates the prisoner so much. Did you ever see or hear of him?"

The Mexican smiled.

"Caramba, yes. 'E did try to stop me ven I come in vid his big gun, till I run in and show my papaire to Sare 'Udsone. 'E vas ver' angree, dat man. 'E swear 'e blow me out de vataire, but 'e no do it. 'E must come to my banquet, and ve vill drink glass champagne to drown de leetel angaire. Aha! he come in vell. Dat vas prettee, ver' prettee."

He referred to the way in which Wright brought his vessel to anchor, clewing up and furling all at once, as soon as the ground tackle took the bottom.

"Dat man is good *hombre del mar*—you say sailor. I most send 'eem de invitation. Exacusa me."

He called to the polite coxswain of his barge, and sent him off with a message to Captain Wright, after which he insisted on opening champagne for his guests, till the boat came back, when it brought a refusal from Wright, on the ground that he was going to sea again forthwith.

The Don listened carelessly, and then went on with the champagne, with which he plied the British officers till Gervaise's tongue began to wag too freely, and he growled out complaints against the duty to which he had been assigned in St. Helena.

"My dear sare," replied Delmont, cordially. "I can feel for you. It vas von vat you call meeserable 'ole—is dat it? dis island. You s'ould veesh somebody would run away vid de prisonaire, aha?"

"I swear I do," said Gervaise, recklessly. "But there is no more danger of that than a fresh earthquake."

The Don looked at him sharply.

"Dere vas eart'quakes 'ere vonce, señor. Dis land is vot dey call volcanico—I vas born in de volcano—you know—ma countree is all volcano."

"Yes," returned Gervaise, with a yawn; "but these were all burned out, long ago. No chance. And as for an escape, it's impossible, unless some one corrupted a British garrison, which no one ever did yet."

Again the Don eyed him sharply.

"Dat is true—but—if dey vas all dronk—would it not be possible to assault de harbor wid de force necessario?"

Gervaise laughed.

"Only a fool would do that, marquis. Our men fight twice as well, drunk, as sober. But I must be going now. Thanks for your hospitality."

"And I s'all see you dis evening?" asked the Don, tenderly pressing his hand.

"If I can find some one to take my place. Has Sir Hudson called yet?"

"I 'ave do myself plaisir to call on Sare 'Udsone sare, already. 'E vill be at de mill quai at sunset, ven it is cool. Adios, señor."

And the boat moved away, when Egerton remarked to his friend, thickly:

"Didn't I tell you? Regular brick, if he is a Spaniard. You'll go to the marquee of course. There's little Jones will be glad to take your place at Longwood. He's been longing to see Boney, for a year past, to get a chance and air his French."

"All right," said Gervaise, recklessly. "I don't care. If Jones wants to try what purgatory's like, let him try it. I'm going to have one spree, if I never have another."

From which it appeared that the Don's champagne pleased the fastidious palate of Captain Gervaise.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FEAST.

As the sun sunk to his rest in the ocean around St. Helena, that day, the scene in the harbor of Jamestown was gay and animated. The ships were all dressed with flags, and boats were darting to and in the harbor, loaded with officers in full uniform, while the band of the Fifty-third regiment was playing on the quay in front of the huge marquee, which was full of servants bustling about.

In the cabin of the gorgeous yacht, "*El Muchachito*," stood the Mexican Don, more splendidly dressed than ever, for his jacket and calzoneros were now of silk velvet, with buttons that gleamed all over with jewels, and his voluminous sash seemed to be made of nothing but gold brocade.

The cabin in which he stood was large and sumptuously furnished, and to most men would have seemed a palace, but this young millionaire looked anxious and worried, careless of the magnificence round him, as he conversed with a gray-haired old seaman, known to the visitors to the yacht as the sailing master, and answering to the name of Don Carlos Herrera.

"You say there has been no signal from Le Borgne all day?" said Delmont, in a tone of anxiety.

"None," was the answer, in French, in an accent that showed the speaker to be anything but a Spaniard. "We have watched all day for it, but it has not come."

Don Alberto bit his lips.

"Can it be possible the emperor declines to escape?" he said, musingly. "It cannot be any other cause. Go up and take a last look. The signal was to be—"

"A white cloth hung out to dry from the last window of the cottage of our friend Toby, the negro," returned Herrera.

"And how was he to know when to hang it out, Ferrier?"

"By watching Miss Mason's cottage and the summer house at Longwood. A cloth from Miss Mason's end window, or on the summer house, is Toby's signal."

Here came a tap at the door and the black coxswain of the barge looked in.

"Toby has hung out the signal, captain," he said, hurriedly, "and the boat is ready to go to the tent. They are getting ready to fire the sunset gun."

The captain's countenance cleared as if by magic, and he smiled brightly.

"So be it, comrades," he cried. "To-night we'll settle the question forever. Herrera, has the Penelope gone to sea?"

"Not yet," was the rather uneasy reply, "and I notice that quite an array of glasses is leveled at us, captain."

Delmont looked at the other keenly.

"Do you think he suspects us?"

"I think he does."

"Are his sails loose?"

"No; he has apparently made up his mind to stay all night."

"Wait till the fog settles and then slip the cable and sweep out."

"But the lights, captain."

"Set them as usual, and leave them all afloat on buoys."

"Very good, captain."

Delmont was leaving the cabin, when the old sailor interposed.

"Suppose we are fired on?"

"Keep on your course and row like mad. If we are sunk, we are sunk."

Herrera or Ferrier nodded.

"And yourself, captain?"

"I expect to be shot," was the tranquil reply, "unless the fog comes on very thick. In that case, I have a chance. If I am alive to-morrow morning, I will meet you at the foot of Diana's Point. Now, farewell, old friend. Martin will be in command till I come."

And the two comrades, bound together in one of the most hazardous schemes that was ever concocted by man, upheld by nothing but a sentiment of romantic adoration of the fallen emperor, shook hands and separated, the marquis to step into the boat and be rowed to the quay, where was spread the gorgeous festival at which the English garrison was to be intoxicated.

The magnificently clad Mexican stepped ashore, the observed of all observers, and gave orders audibly that the boat should return to the yacht and await orders from the shore which would come in the shape of the band playing "Home, Sweet Home!" Then the boat rowed away, and he went to the marquee, where a few of the crew of the yacht, with a number of negroes from the town, were hovering round the tables; and ordered the sides of the huge marquee to be looped up that all might see the feast was ready.

The sight of the long tables, glittering with silver plate, raised a general murmur of admiration in the crowd, in the midst of which the English band struck up "God save the King," as Sir Hudson Lowe in his carriage, followed by a brilliant staff of officers, drove down the street and alighted.

The Don was the first man to welcome him, and from that moment the guests began to arrive so quickly that for a quarter of an hour he could hardly be said to be at rest a moment, as he moved from one to another, welcoming all.

And then it came out that this courteous host had no one of his followers on whom he could depend to assist him in placing his guests, and the march to the tables, which should have been, according to Sir Hudson's ideas, a stately and orderly ceremonial, ended in a sort of general scramble for the best places, at the end of which Sir Hudson found that hardly an officer of his staff was visible, while the tent was a scene of confusion in which the buzz of voices mingled with the pop of champagne corks, and no one seemed to have any idea of anything beyond a general spree, drinking as much as possible.

The fact was that, life at St. Helena under Sir Hudson was so stiff and formal, that the officers welcomed this interruption the more fervently because they saw that the strange Mexican was unused to conducting large feasts, and had no idea of English customs.

Instead of a ponderous silent ceremony, with long tiresome speeches, the tables were surrounded by jolly people, eating, drinking and talking all together, and when Sir Hudson wanted to rise and propose a toast, no one listened to him, and he saw clearly that more than half the younger officers were already on the road to intoxication.

He turned to his host and made signs that he wanted silence, when the Mexican, who had not drunk anything so far, but was looking placidly on at the disturbance, turned to a negro behind him, and made him a sign, by lifting his hand and nodding.

Instantly the negro beat a large silver gong

with all his might, and in the short silence that followed Sir Hudson jumped up and cried:

"Gentlemen will you keep silence a moment, while toasts are proposed? I give you our worthy host Don Alberto Delmont, a warm friend of England and a fierce hater of the Usurper."

The half-intoxicated youths at the table raised a cheer, and began to hammer their glasses, crying:

"Delmont! Delmont! Speech! Speech!"

Then the Mexican rose smilingly and began to speak:

"*Senores y caballeros*—dat is vat you call—gentilmen—I vos not mosh acquaint your language, bote I spik de sentiment of my 'art, ven I say you all welcome. Drink all de champagne dere be ashore. I do not vant see von bottel back. And to make begin, I propose de 'ealt' of Sare Lowe—de man vat all de world know—de biggest—vat you call—turna-key in de world. He 'ave big prison, big prisoner, and he keep 'eem tight—eh, caramba! 'e keep 'eem tight—ere is Sare 'Udson."

The officers shouted and laughed at the epithet "turnkey" applied to Sir Hudson, which they attributed to the Don's bad English, but the governor himself scowled and looked offended with no one to confide his feelings to, for the officers of his staff kept away on purpose, enjoying their chief's predicament, and he heard the cry all over the tent:

"That's good! The turnkey! By Jove! did you hear that? Three cheers for the Don! Here, waiter, fill my glass!"

And the feast went on getting more and more uproarious, till the loud boom of a gun from the fort over the harbor announced that it was nine o'clock, and Sir Hudson called out:

"Where's Colonel Robertson? Colonel! Here!"

But no colonel was to be found in the uproarious crowd, which had broken up into groups, drinking and smoking round the table in a devil-may-care spirit; and when Sir Hudson looked round for his host, lo! he had gone, too, lost in the crowd.

The governor, who had drank but little, began for the first time to have a sort of suspicion that all was not right. He rose from his seat, looked round, and found that quite a number of the officers were under the table, fast asleep, while the others were discussing matters with a vehemence that showed they were all more or less drunk.

He looked out from the wall of the tent and saw that heavy sea fogs had rolled in and blotted out the lights of the ships and town. And of the yacht's crew not one was to be seen in the marquee, where the town negroes were gathered in a corner, getting drunk in their own style on the leavings of half-empty bottles.

Sir Hudson passed from his chair, now in considerable of a fright, looking for a sober officer to whom to give an order, when the fog and darkness outside were suddenly illuminated by a bright flash, followed by the report of a shot gun, firing grape, as one could tell by the sharp whirring of the fragments.

It came from the harbor, and was followed by another and another in quick succession, at which the drunken men in the marquee started up in confusion, and began to shout all sorts of inquiries, till Sir Hudson jumped on a table, roaring:

"Every officer to his quarters at once! There is a plot somewhere! Where is the marquis? Search for him and arrest him!"

In a very few minutes the tent was half-empty, when Sir Hudson shouted for the officers of his staff, and received only a single response from Captain Gervaise, who came lurching toward him with a smile on his face, repeating:

"What is't, S'r Hudson? Redge Gervaise al's on juty."

"You're drunk, sir!" said Sir Hudson, angrily. "What are you doing here? You are under arrest, sir."

Gervaise snapped his fingers.

"Rest be hanged! I've got a substitute on spy duty. Jonesy—he's there. Boney's safe 'nuff, ole fel. Sick's a dog. Ooray!"

Sir Hudson turned angrily away, and went out to find his carriage, when he heard the clatter of hoofs at full speed, as some one rode up and a voice cried:

"Sir Hudson? Where's Sir Hudson Lowe?"

"Here! here! What is it?" cried the governor, in shaking tones. "Has the prisoner escaped?"

The one haunting supposition was forever there, and it found voice.

"No, sir."

Out of the fog rode an English orderly dragon, and Sir Hudson asked:

"Well, what is it? Where are you from?"

"From Longwood, sir. Mr. Jones, of the 53d, is on duty there to-night, sir, and he sent me to tell you how General Bonyparty has been took bad, sir, and if there's any doctors they ought to be sent up!"

Sir Hudson uttered a sigh of relief.

"Is that all? Thank God! I thought it was worse. What was that firing about?"

"I don't know, sir. I was a-gallopin' as 'ard as I could, when I seen the fog lit up in the 'arbor below, and jest at that minute a wessel sailed out to sea out of the edge of the fog."

Couldn't see in the dark what it was, sir, but see the sails, as was funny kind, sir, three-cornered. Never see sich a thing afore, sir."

"Three-cornered!" ejaculated the governor. "By Heavens, it must be the felucca."

Then he rushed down to the edge of the quay, calling loudly for a boat, and immediately afterward heard the dash of oars, as a large boat came tearing in, bumping up on the steps in the fog, when a voice cried:

"Avast there, you fools! Do you want to stave the boat? Bowman out there!—hook on to something!"

"What's that boat?" cried Sir Hudson. "I'm Sir Hudson Lowe. Answer quick!"

"Jolly-boat of the Penelope, sir!" cried the man in the fog. "I'm Lieutenant Chumley, sir, sent by Captain Wright to find you. Something's wrong. Wait till I find the steps in this fog and I'll tell you, sir."

"Here they are—here!" cried Sir Hudson, impatiently, and then he saw the bow of the boat, and soon after a naval officer stepped ashore and came up to him, saying, in a loud voice:

"Send up to Longwood at once, sir! The captain thinks something's wrong. The felucca has slipped off in the dark, leaving her lights tied to three buoys; and we wasted three rounds on them when we heard the dip of her oars. She's cut and run, and we suspect her to be French and an emissary of Bonaparte."

By this time the whole port was alive, lights flying in the fog, people shouting, and the whole town aroused, while rumors of all sorts were passing to and fro. Sir Hudson, puzzled and anxious, said:

"I've just had a message that the prisoner has been taken ill. Can that be a part of the plot, do you think, sir?"

Tom Chumley scratched his head.

"Shouldn't wonder, sir. These devils are up to all sorts of tricks. I only found out what was the matter by accident. I had a glass, and recognized the captain of the felucca as a young man who played a desperate game to sink us four years ago. He was dressed Mexican fashion, and we thought you had him safe enough, as he went ashore."

"He shall be arrested!" cried the governor.

"Go back and tell Wright to put to sea at once and catch that felucca. I'll attend to the rest. Good-night, sir."

Chumley touched his cap.

"Please, Sir Hudson—"

"Well?"

"It can't be done till morning. The fog lies so thick we dare not go for fear of grounding on something."

"The felucca's gone, sir, on your own story, hasn't she?"

"Yes, sir. She draws less than ten feet, we twenty-two. She has sweeps; we can't move without wind, and there's no wind till the fog lifts."

"Then scour the harbor with boats till it lifts, and then catch her, sir."

"Very good, sir."

Then Sir Hudson strode back to the marquee, still lighted up from the lately-abandoned feast, and found at last a sober officer, who, having been on duty outside, had escaped the general debauch, and whom he ordered to look for his carriage.

The officer saluted.

"Beg pardon, sir; but that's just what I was looking for. It's gone, sir, orderlies and all."

"Gone? Impossible!"

"Indeed it has, sir. I've sent out the alarm, but the fog prevents us seeing the telegraph signals, and no one seems to know where it has gone."

Sir Hudson turned very pale, and just at that moment, as if to confirm his worst fears, out boomed a gun, high above the fog, which they knew came from the citadel, behind which was the Governor's House.

It was the signal that the prisoner had escaped!

Sir Hudson uttered a low cry of dismay.

"Get me a horse—something—anything. I must get out of this accursed fog before I can see," he said; and the officer at once answered:

"There's the orderly's horse. It's the only one to be found, Sir Hudson—"

"Where is it, sir?"

"Here, sir."

The impatient governor climbed on the animal, hatless as he was, without spurs, and dashed in his heels, when the animal, a hard-mouthed old troop-horse, gave a grunt and trotted slowly off, with the gait of an elephant.

In vain did the governor shake the bridle, kick and curse; the old horse, finding that its rider had no spurs or whip, kept its own pace and subsided to a walk, climbing the hill to the citadel, where at last Sir Hudson emerged from the fog and beheld the stars shining brightly above him.

The citadel was not far off, and he rode toward it, cursing all the way, to be halted by a sentry, who cocked his musket and shouted sternly:

"Who goes there?"

"Sir Hudson Lowe, governor," cried the unhappy officer, foreseeing more delay.

"Halt!" was the stern reply. "You can't come that over me. Halt, or I'll make a hole in ye."

And the governor saw the man level his musket.

"What do you mean?" he shouted. "Don't you know me, sirrah?"

"Sirrah be blowed," replied the sentry. "I knows my orders. Sir 'Udson's past long ago in his carriage like a gent. You're a bloomin' French spy, you are. 'Alt, till I call the corporal of the guard."

"Call him then, for Heaven's sake!" cried Sir Hudson, too anxious to appreciate the humor of the position.

"Ay, ay, I'll call 'im; but you get down off that 'orse, and be blowed to ye," was the majestic reply of the sentry, who, like all old soldiers, keenly relished the authority conferred on him by his post. And the Governor of St. Helena had to get down off his horse, take a seat on a rock, covered by the sentry's musket, and wait for the call to go round and summon the corporal, who came up angrily, crying:

"What's the row 'ere, in 'Eaven's name?"

When he approached and recognized the face of Sir Hudson, which he did at once, he could only ejaculate:

"Good 'eavens, Sir 'Udson, what's 'appened?"

"Who fired that gun?" was the only reply of the governor. "The escape gun, I mean?"

"I don't know, sir; but the fort's alarmed and the patrols is out. We thought you'd gone to Longwood, sir."

"Why?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but warn't it your hexcelency as drived that way 'arf an hour ago?"

Sir Hudson listened, and was more puzzled than ever; but he took his determination in a moment.

"There's a plot on foot, corporal, but I think we're in time to beat it," he said. "Run back to the fort and tell the officer of the day to send me a horse, a cap, a pair of spurs, and a dozen dragoons. I'm going to Longwood."

The corporal ran back, and the sentry said, respectfully:

"Ope you don't blame me, Sir 'Udson. Didn't know it was you, sir."

"Blame you? No; you did right. You say you saw my carriage go by here?"

"Yes, sir, and the orderly gave the word all correct, and told me as 'ow Sir 'Udson was a-goin' to pay a night visit to old Boneyparty, sir."

"Did you see any one in the carriage?"

"Yes, sir, there was an ossifer, as I took for Captain 'Enry Hedgerton of ours, sir, and he looked to me, savin' your presence, sir, jist as drunk as a lord, a-singin' as he went by."

Here they heard a clattering of hoofs, and up rode the squad of dragoons Sir Hudson had sent for.

In feverish haste he buckled on the spurs brought him, mounted a fresh horse, and dashed off full speed on the road to Longwood, only a mile and a half away.

To the sentry who challenged him he gave the word hurriedly, and inquired:

"Who sent for a doctor here? Where is the General Bonaparte?"

"Mr. Jones can tell you, sir," was the reply. "There's been a regular row round 'ere, sir, and I don't know what it's about."

Sir Hudson rode up to the door of the house, dismounted and rushed in, when the first person he met was Bertrand, to whom he cried:

"Where is the prisoner?"

"Gone where you'll never find him," was the other's scornful reply. "His majesty is at sea before this."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ESCAPE FOILED.

SIR HUDSON deigned no reply to Bertrand. He had had many passages of arms with the emperor's attendants, in all of which he had been worsted, and he was too anxious to engage in a squabble now.

"Mr. Jones! Where's Mr. Jones?" he cried.

Up came a young subaltern, pale and anxious looking.

"Oh, Sir Hudson, it's not my fault—"

"Silence, sir! We've no time to lose. Who sent for that doctor?"

"I did, sir."

"What made you send?"

"They told me the emp—I mean the general was taken very ill, sir, with cramps, and Doctor Autoumarchi was down at Jamestown, so I thought—"

"You did right, sir. Well, what next?"

"And then I thought to send for Dr. Smiley, of the 53d, sir, and sent off another orderly after him; but he'd gone too; and at last I thought I'd go in and see if I couldn't help myself, sir. And they wouldn't let me into his room. Well, I knew that wasn't right. Ger-vaise told me I must insist on seeing him in such a case, so I called out the guard, went in, and he wasn't there, sir, at all, nor in the house."

"Well, sir—"

"Well, sir, I had the grounds searched, and he wasn't there either."

"And what did you do then?"

"Signaled the station, sir, and they sent it on to the fort to fire the gun."

"You did right, sir."

Jones breathed more freely.

The governor frowned thoughtfully and asked after a pause:

"When did you last see the general?"

"At sunset, sir, when he came in from the summer house."

"The summer house?"

"Yes, sir. He'd been there all the afternoon?"

"Has that been searched?"

Jones started.

"No, sir. I thought—"

"Go and search it at once. Stay, call the guard. I'll go too. Get lights!"

Bertrand, who had been listening to the colloquy, began to feel uneasy. He knew that it was essential the emperor's mode of escape should be kept secret till the morning if possible; and he had not had time to leave the house since he smuggled out the emperor.

He interposed therefore.

"If I may presume to advise, sare—"

"You may not!" was the governor's stern reply. "I command this island, sir. Go to your room under close arrest."

Bertrand bowed, and observed sarcastically:

"When a coward has power, he is sure to use it like a tyrant."

Sir Hudson took no notice, but went out of the house, ordered up all the guard available, sent an alarm to the 53d, and then proceeded to the summer house.

As they came near, they were surprised to hear voices in French, and saw that the little structure had more than one person in it, among whom Sir Hudson, to his intense relief, perceived the figure of the emperor supported in the arms of a big-bearded man, while Count Montholon and Gavroche were kneeling by his side.

The English governor advanced, holding up a lantern, with two soldiers by his side with cocked muskets, and, as he did so, heard the emperor utter a faint groan.

In another minute the Frenchmen realized that they were seen, and Montholon started to his feet and faced the governor, demanding fiercely:

"Wherefore this intrusion?"

Sir Hudson smiled sardonically. He felt that he was safe as he replied:

"Only a little visit of anxiety. We heard that the general was unwell, and I have sent for a doctor."

"Well, do you not see he is unwell—no, dying?" snarled out the bearded man, savagely. "Morbieu, had it not been for that, you devils of English would never have caught us."

Sir Hudson held up the lantern.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Jean Martin, at your service," was the scornful reply. "I came here to get his majesty out of your clutches, and, but for the hand of God, we should have done it. Do what you please with me. He will never leave St. Helena alive. Where is the doctor? You can see he is needed."

Indeed it was evident the man spoke the truth. The usual pallor of the emperor had increased to a ghastly white, and he was almost insensible, groaning faintly.

Sir Hudson turned to Jones.

"Get a litter and carry in the general," he said. "Signal the telegraph station that it is all right. I blame myself for this night."

Then he waited silently, not attempting to interfere with the Frenchman, till Jones came back with two men and a stretcher, on which they laid the senseless form of the emperor.

At that moment Napoleon opened his eyes, in a sleepy, bewildered manner, and said, in a low tone:

"What is this? Where is Duroc? Have the enemy moved yet?"

"No, sire," replied Montholon, soothingly.

"Your majesty has been ill, that is all."

The emperor looked round till his eyes fell on the form of Sir Hudson. Then he started violently, and demanded:

"What means this intrusion? How dare that man enter my apartment?"

Sir Hudson bowed sarcastically.

"Your illness makes you stupid, general. You are out of doors. You have been, it seems, trying to escape, and Heaven has shown you that it is on the side of England all the time."

The emperor listened and passed his hand across his brow, then looked round till his eyes rested on Jean Martin. The sight of that face seemed to recall him to his recollection, and he said to Sir Hudson:

"I trust, monsieur, you will not visit the misfortune Heaven has sent on us upon this brave man, who has nothing to answer for, but fidelity to me."

"Of course, general," was the cold reply, "the man will be tried by court martial for his offense."

"What offense, monsieur?"

"Aiding the escape of a prisoner of war."

"But there is no war, monsieur."

Sir Hudson frowned.

"I have no time to discuss the question. He will be tried, and probably shot."

The emperor turned his head to Martin.

"In that case, my friend," he said, quietly, "it is time you escaped. Go at once."

"Arrest him," cried Sir Hudson; but the one-eyed giant was too quick.

The words were hardly out of the mouth of Napoleon, when Jean Martin made a grab for the soldier next to him, taking him by surprise, and knocking his head against that of his next comrade with such force that both men reeled and fell senseless.

In another moment he was into the bushes at the edge of the cliff, and had vanished with a taunting laugh, which they heard repeated a little later far below.

And before they could recover from the surprise in which they were, Count Montholon darted into the shrubbery, tore up something from the ground and threw it over the rocks, crying:

"Take care. The ladder!"

Then he and Gavroche burst out into a scornful laugh at the angry amazement of the Englishman, who realized how the daring escape had been effected.

Sir Hudson was too cool to let any one know how mortified he was; but when they were all back in the house he set a double guard over Longwood, and spent the rest of the night in investigations which he pursued next day, succeeding in discovering the following facts:

The champagne at Delmont's banquet was all drugged, and the cigarettes and cigars offered to the guests had been heavily loaded with opium.

Captain Egerton, in a half drunken state, had left the banquet with Marquis Delmont, and had given orders to Sir Hudson's escort to take the visitor to Longwood and thence out to Diana's Peak, where the carriage was found, next morning, the coachman stating he been instructed to wait there till Captain Egerton and the Marquis came back from a walk.

They never came back; but Captain Egerton was found among the rocks, a little way from the road, tied hand and foot, and gagged with a dagger.

He had a confused recollection of getting a blow on the head in the dark, but who bound him he could not tell. How he came to give the orders to the coachman he was equally unable to explain. He dimly remembered that the marquis coaxed him to do it for a joke, and that was all.

But what had become of the marquis and the felucca no one could tell.

The Penelope had put to sea as soon as the night fog cleared away, and had scoured the sea round the island, with her consort, the Arethusa, but what had become of the yacht was a mystery that no one could explain till the Indianman Bombay Castle came into Jamestown one day, and her captain paid a visit to Sir Hudson Lowe, to whom he said he had news to report.

Sir Hudson, always on the alert, sent word that he would see Captain Harwood, who soon came in, a plain sailor-like man, and told his story.

It seemed that the Bombay Castle had fallen in with the gorgeous felucca that had excited so much attention at St. Helena, and that the Mexican had given Harwood a letter to deliver to Sir Hudson Lowe, claiming the governor as an old friend, and another to Captain Henry Egerton of the 53d regiment.

Sir Hudson opened his own letter, and found in it these words in French:

"Sir—But for the unfortunate illness of his majesty, the Emperor of the French, at the moment when his escape was assured, he would have been in safety ere this. Being apprehensive that you, in true English spirit, will take advantage of this accident to heap insults on the emperor and further curtail his few privileges, I hereby warn you, Sir Hudson Lowe, that if His Majesty die in your hands and I find that you have not treated him in a manner befitting his rank, after the date of this letter, I shall hold you responsible and punish you for it whenever we meet, in the same manner as I have sworn to punish the villain Wright, who commands the Penelope. Be warned. In a week from the time this letter reaches you, I shall appear before St. Helena and demand an answer."

"ALBERT DELMONT,
Chief of the League of Liberty."

Sir Hudson laughed scornfully and tossed the paper on the floor.

"The man is a braggart," he said. "I shall not notice his letter, save to watch for him when he comes. Wright will catch him. Let me see the other letter to Egerton."

"But it's not for you, Sir Hudson," the old sailor objected bluffly.

"Never mind, sir. I command here and I am responsible for the safety of the prisoner. This scoundrel may be trying to tamper with my officers."

"In that case certainly, Sir Hudson."

And the letter was delivered.

It was written in English, every word spelled correctly, as if copied from a book.

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN EGERTON:

"I thank you for your politeness to me. When you are intoxicated, you are a man charming. You obey the order so well. I have the honor to invite

you to dinner on the yacht when I come next week. I shall signal you by a tricolor. If you have mind to eat good dinner, come.

"Your friend,

"ALBERT DELMONT."

"What does he mean by that?" mused the governor. "There is something more than bravado in that. So he intends to hoist the tricolor."

"But it is not recognized as a flag," objected Captain Harwood, scandalized.

"It is a pirate's flag," answered Sir Hudson spitefully; "and the man who dares to fly it within sight of this island will meet a pirate's fate."

"Serve him right," quoth the honest Briton. "If I'd known what was in those letters, Sir Hudson, I'd have cut off my hand before I'd have taken them, and I'm only sorry I didn't blow the rascal out of the water as it was."

"Was his felucca armed?" asked the governor interrupting.

"Not that I saw, Sir Hudson, but there's no telling; there's so many Yankee inventions about nowadays. Between you and me, Sir Hudson, I've always thought we was very foolish not to lick those Yankees well while we were at it. They'll trouble us yet, some day."

"You're quite right, captain. If there's anything I hate worse than I do a Frenchman it is a Yankee."

"And that's well said," answered the captain of the Bombay Castle as he took his leave, to tell his first mate that Sir Hudson was a very pleasant person indeed."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRICOLOR.

DAY after day passed by in the monotonous round of duty at St. Helena, where public interest was concentrated on a single man and he a prisoner; and it began to be spoken of on the island that General Bonaparte was growing worse daily, and could not last many months.

The excitement attendant on the daring attempt at his rescue had brought on a paroxysm of his disease, which convinced his most ardent followers, that it would be impossible and useless to make another attempt, and even Sir Hudson Lowe, with all his hatred of Napoleon, could not help being touched by the sight of his sufferings, and allowed him more privilege than he had been wont to, while not relaxing in the least his vigilance. Three weeks had passed since the fatal night on which Delmont's daring plan of escape had been foiled so unexpectedly, and the emperor had recovered so far that the doctor had allowed him to go out in the air in the daytime, and he had expressed a wish to be taken to the summer house which had witnessed the failure of all his projects, when the mysterious felucca made her appearance in sight of the island, as Delmont had promised in his letter to Sir Hudson, flying the tricolored flag.

She came boldly in with a fair wind, sailing to and fro as if to display the flag in bravado, at a time when the Penelope and Arethusa were cruising hull down, to windward and leeward of the island, while the seventy-four Hotspur and the ten-gun brigs Vixen and Fury, were lying at anchor in the roads of Jamestown.

The emperor was lying back in a large invalid's chair when she came, and did not at first recognize her.

Bertrand, who was in attendance with a glass, had made her out some time, but did not dare to inform his master, till the sound of a gun in the harbor made Napoleon turn his head, and inquire:

"What is the matter, Bertrand? Is any ship coming in?"

The Grand Marshal bowed and said:

"I fear, sire, that our brave and devoted friend, Delmont, is about to expose himself to fresh danger in our behalf. He is in full sight, with the tricolor displayed. It is a risk that is useless and foolish."

The emperor turned and looked at the little vessel for the first time with attention.

"Give me the glass," he said.

He surveyed the felucca long and steadily, then swept the coast all round, till he rested on the harbor when he remarked:

"The two brigs are making sail to fight him. It is a pity, Bertrand, that men will act without orders. He should not have come in again. But he is not a man to be judged like others. He has a purpose. He wishes to communicate with me."

"It is impossible, sire," said Bertrand. "It could not be done unless he had wings, and if he had means to get a message to you, we cannot send one back to him."

"I don't know that," returned the emperor, quickly. "I have seen wonderful things done in my time. Ah! there go the two brigs to meet him."

In fact the two brigs, each under a cloud of studding-sails, were stretching out of the harbor toward the distant felucca, while the frigate Penelope, out on the southern horizon, was rising fast, her head laid toward the same point.

The Arethusa could not be seen, hidden by the mountains of the island.

The felucca, watched with intense interest by

the group in the summer house, continued to stand off and on, in the same leisurely manner, till the brigs were almost within gun-shot, when she spread another sail and moved off toward the open ocean, as if to taunt her adversaries with the sight of the flag flying at her peak.

And she laid her course so as to cross that of the Penelope, as if she wished to get all three of her foes together.

"Strange," observed Bertrand to his master, "that such a small vessel should stand toward that frigate. It looks as if the man were bent on self destruction. If he once gets within gun-shot of the large vessel, she will sink him with a single broadside."

The emperor made no reply; but continued watching through the glass.

On sailed the brigs, and it became plain that they were gaining on the felucca, for, first one, then the other, began to fire at her, and although the shot fell short, it was evident that the gunners were encouraged to go on further.

Bertrand sighed.

"I fear, sire, our poor friend will pay a penalty for his rashness. He will be taken captive."

"He will not," was the unexpected reply of the emperor. "He is leading them on for some purpose. I cannot tell what, yet. Ah! the frigate has raised her hull from the water. Do you notice, Bertrand, from this elevated spot, how one appreciates the roundness of the earth? I can fancy I almost see the curve of the ocean."

Bertrand made an impatient movement.

"I can only think of the peril of our poor friend, sire."

"You are wrong, count. The wonders of nature are always to be admired. How petty, beside this grand sweep of water, seem to be our human aims and deeds. All of Europe could be whelmed in that ocean before us, and not a ship need sail any the more carefully. St. Peters and the pyramids might be dropped under the spot where those pigmy vessels are now sailing, and no man could find them, if he marked not the place where they were sunken."

"The frigate has fired a gun!" said Bertrand dryly. "All your majesty's ideas of philosophy will not save the felucca, if she holds her course that way."

The emperor smiled.

"But see. She has changed it, and now they are all after her, one behind the other, while—ah—what is that?"

He looked long and keenly at the felucca, then handed the glass to Bertrand.

"Tell me what you see, count," he said.

Bertrand took a long look.

"I see nothing, sire."

"Look at the bow of the felucca."

"I see it, sire. She is making a great foam as she plows the water."

"True; more than she should. But do you not see the reason?"

"No, sire."

"Simpleton. Do you not observe that she has something white that hangs into the water before her?"

"Yes, sire. I see that."

"And you do not know what it means?"

"I am not a sailor, sire."

"Then you are foolish. A man should learn everything he has a chance to acquire in this world. He will find the use of it. I remember when I was a lieutenant, being in arrest for ten days, with no companion but the 'Spirit of the Law.' It was dull reading, but I mastered it, and found the use of it when I helped frame the Code of France. So, too, on the voyage to Egypt, I took care to learn all I could of naval matters. It may yet prove useful, if this trouble in my vitals does not consume me too soon. The felucca is towing a sail from her bows, because she wishes her enemies to think they can come up with her. See?"

Through the glass the spectacle of the chase had become very interesting.

The little felucca, gay with color, was dashing along before the frigate and the two brigs, which followed under a cloud of canvas on the same tack.

Every now and then one of the brigs would yaw and fire a gun, but the missile always fell short.

Then the frigate would try the same game, and the larger cloud of smoke told that the metal she used was much heavier, while the path of the shot could be traced in lines of spray on either side of the yacht, never seeming to strike it.

"It is a hard thing to strike a small mark in a heavy sea," observed the emperor, as he watched the abortive attempts. "But what is that? *Morbleu!* a rocket!"

Something issued from the deck of the felucca in a little train of white smoke, hardly visible, and then came a big cloud in the midst of the frigate's canvas, and they saw her luff up into the wind, while the smoke in her sails grew black and dense, and it became evident that she was on fire.

The two brigs also luffed up and came to the assistance of their consort, when the emperor turned quietly to Bertrand.

"You see the captain of the felucca is no

fool. That was a rocket, and he has set the frigate's sails on fire. The brigs are afraid of the same fate."

The audacious commander of the little felucca actually luffed up at this moment, and they saw several rockets issue from his decks, aimed at the sails of his pursuers, under which, in three minutes more, they were all on fire, and drifting helplessly down the wind, while the felucca, dropping the sail she had been towing, came skimming toward the island, with the tricolor flaunting at her peak safe from further pursuit.

The emperor shut the glass.

"Now we shall see what he has to say to us. Bertrand, go to my library and you will find in the secret drawer in the table the signal book of the navy, as I had it. He means to signal to us, now that there is no one to interrupt him."

Bertrand went rapidly to the house.

The whole population of the island seemed to be so intent on the audacious felucca that they paid no attention to the movements of the prisoner at the summer house.

The fiery fate of the three pursuers, so superior in apparent means of offense, had paralyzed the defense of the island for the moment.

Congreve rockets were by no means new in warfare at the time, having been used at the battle of Leipsic and by the British army on one or two occasions; but their use had proved so uncertain that little dependence was placed on them, though their effects were known to be terrible if they struck.

The Hotspur, despite the fact that she was a seventy-four, did not dare put to sea after the felucca, and every one was watching the contest of the two brigs and the frigate with the flames, which they did not succeed in subduing till they had cut away the masts and rigging, reducing themselves to drifting hulks, incapable of further pursuit of anything.

And the daring little vessel that had braved so many perils now stood on toward the island, still within less than half a mile of the ravine on which Longwood looked down, when, as the emperor had foreseen, she began signaling to the little summer house, in defiance of the British garrison, Bertrand interpreting the numbers as the flag floated successively up, while Montholon waved a white handkerchief conspicuously from the point.

"Work quickly, messieurs," observed the emperor, calmly. "They cannot stop him, but they can come and send us into the house. Ah, positively, I can see our friend standing on his deck."

Through the glass they could see the little figure of Delmont, the gold lace on his bright costume glittering in the sun, as he stood watching the summer-house on the point, while the one-eyed giant, similarly clad, stood beside a rocket-tube, which was poised on a pivot-stand amidst ships.

Bertrand began to read out the message of the flags.

"Is the emperor better? Answer—Yes—wave flag; No—drop flag."

"Wave the flag, Montholon," said the emperor. "That is a clever young man."

The next question that came was:

"Are you ready to try again?"

"Drop the flag, Montholon," said the emperor, shortly.

"Are you afraid of failure?"

This was the next interrogatory.

"Drop the flag, Montholon."

"Is it too early?"

"Drop the flag."

"Is it too late?"

The emperor sighed as he said:

"Wave the flag, Montholon. Ah, my poor faithful fellow, you know not what it costs me to say that; but I cannot fight God and man together. Wave the flag."

The flag was waved, and Bertrand, through the glass, saw Delmont make a gesture of despair, which he interrupted to speak to the one-eyed man, pointing toward the telegraph station on the island.

The count looked there, and saw the arms of the semaphore waving frantically, as if signaling a message, while another semaphore on top of the citadel was equally active.

The next moment the emperor said:

"He has fired at the telegraph station. He sees they are trying to stop us."

Then they heard a crash and explosion, as the huge congreve rocket burst on the telegraph tower and sent it into fragments, while a new signal went up to the peak of the felucca.

"What is it, Bertrand?" asked Napoleon.

"Will you grant me an interview?"

"How can I, Bertrand? No."

The flag was dropped, and another signal went up, which read:

"I am coming ashore to see the emperor. If he does not forbid me to come, let the flag be waved. I will enter Longwood in disguise. There is no danger. Can I come?"

The emperor seemed moved at the ardent persistency of the request; bowed his head; and the flag was waved, just as they heard loud voices coming toward them:

"They're signaling; stop 'em!"

Bertrand adroitly hid the book under his

coat, and in another moment Captain Gervaise came hurriedly up, exclaiming:

"This is against orders, general. You must instantly return to the house."

The emperor turned his head placidly.

"Since when, captain, is it forbidden to me to take the air?"

"It is not forbidden, but you are signaling to that vessel."

"My dear monsieur, what have we to signal with? Where are the flags?"

"That infamous pirate yonder is making signals to you," retorted Gervaise, sharply, "and you were seen to wave a white flag in answer. You must come into the house at once."

The emperor laughed and rose.

"What makes her a pirate?" he asked. "Is it the fact that she has just beaten your three vessels so handsomely? To be sure, that is annoying, but it does not make her a pirate."

"She carries the flag of no nation in Europe," retorted Gervaise, sarcastically.

"Pardon me, monsieur. It is a flag whose color was seen floating in triumph over every capital in Europe."

"Save one, general. Not London."

"Ah, true! But then, that was not your people but your sea that saved it."

"General, are you going into the house, or do you wish me to call the guard?"

It was the first time Gervaise had ever uttered such a threat, and the emperor's eye flashed with some of its old fire as he returned, majestically:

"Sir, there was a time when I had a guard who would have cut you to pieces for less than that! Now I have none—only a jailer and turnkeys. You, I believe, play the part of police spy. Yes, sir, I am going into the house. I have finished my little conversation with my faithful follower, who has just beaten three English ships. When we are away you might try to continue the dialogue."

And the prisoner walked slowly to the house, while Gervaise advanced to the front of the summer house and looked down long and closely at the felucca, which had defied the whole British force so far.

He eyed her through a glass and saw that the one-eyed man was pointing a long rocket tube toward the shore, while the gorgeous Mexican, Delmont, was looking up through a telescope at the summer house.

There is something peculiar in the feeling of a man exchanging glances with another a mile off through a powerful glass, with which each can distinguish the features of the other. It seems as if they were face to face at one moment and far away the next when the glass is removed from the eye.

Gervaise saw Delmont speak, and could fancy, from the movement of the lips, that he understood what was said, accompanied as it was by a gesture of pointing toward the summer house. The next moment he became sensible of the hissing and whizzing of a rocket, coming straight toward him, and had only time to jump to one side and throw himself flat on the ground at the edge of the cliff just as the missile struck the summer house and knocked it into fragments, exploding in a manner that showed what a fearful projectile it might be in the midst of a town. Gervaise was a cool, brave officer, and as soon as he had satisfied himself that he was not hurt he leaped up and leveled his glass at the felucca again.

There stood the Don on his quarter-deck, a scowl distorting his handsome, dark face, and as soon as he saw the scarlet coat on the top of the cliff he pointed it eagerly out to the one-eyed man, who was adjusting a new rocket in the tube.

"It is I," said Gervaise to himself. "That's why he fired the rocket. Well, he's a bold one, and I won't give him an excuse to send another messenger."

So saying he waved his hand to the felucca and walked away from the cliff to the house, where he found the guard turned out and great excitement prevailing.

Pretty soon the heavy guns of the fort began to try the range of the daring intruder, dropping sixty-eight-pound shot into the sea all round her, and the Hotspur got under way and moved slowly out, firing her bow-chasers as soon as she left the port, the shot coming close to the yacht.

Then, and not till then, to the great relief of every one in the garrison, the felucca sailed away out of range, and they saw her pass the disabled frigate and brigs and stretch away to the southwest to a place on the horizon where a strange sail had made its appearance.

The stranger came on, and could soon be made out from the island as a schooner of the fore-and-aft rig that had become known already as peculiarly American.

She was seen to close up to the yacht and sail off in company with her, when both vessels disappeared in the southwest, to be no more seen that day.

Several hours afterward, the Penelope, Vixen and Fury came in under jury masts and such sail as they could spread, and Captain Wright went on shore to report to Sir Hudson Lowe, who was chafing and vowing revenge.

From Wright's report, it seemed that the first rocket burst in the head of his foretopmast and spread a rain of liquid fire over masts and sails, on which water had no effect, and which compelled them to cut away the masts to save the ship.

It was necessary of course to refit the vessels, and the dock-yard proved so short of materials that it was finally resolved to refit the Penelope as far as the supplies warranted, and run her away to the island of Ascension to complete her equipment.

CHAPTER XV. THE SECRET VISIT.

THE Penelope sailed away for Ascension, and the Arethusa took her place, while the two brigs cruised to the north of the island, and everything resumed its usual monotony at St. Helena for nearly a week. At the end of that time the lookout on Diana's Peak, where a new telegraph station had been established, signaled to the town that the felucca and American schooner had hove in sight to the north, and were beating up for the island again.

All was astir in St. Helena at this news, and a smart lookout was kept for two days, during which no English ship came in sight, and the mysterious cruisers still sailed in company.

On the third day they disappeared, going due west, and the cause of their haste was apparent when two British frigates made their appearance from the north, in pursuit, showing that the voyage of the Penelope had not been made in vain.

The frigates chased the two consorts out of sight even from Diana's Peak; and the distant echoes of guns showed that an engagement was going on late in the afternoon, till night closed in and all became quiet.

That very night, as Count Bertrand was standing by the ruins of the old summer house he became aware of a light out on the sea, where there had been no vessel when the sun went down, and, a moment later, distinguished a signal, that he remembered in the night-book, which ran, in French:

"I am coming to visit."

The count, having no means of answering the signal, went back to the house, where he showed a light at an upper window three times, and was rewarded by seeing the answering signal, out on the sea:

"I understand."

Immediately he went down to the emperor, whom he found sitting in his chair, still dictating, but unable to walk about, as he had been wont to do.

Napoleon looked wearily up. The last few days had aged him greatly, and given his face a wan, faded expression, with sunken eye, that showed the ravages of his terrible disease.

The pain which had been wont to leave him at times, was now constant, if not so acute; and the first man in Europe was rapidly sinking into his grave.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The brave men outside signal that one of them is coming to visit, sire."

"Let them come," said Napoleon wearily.

"It may be for the best that they should see with their own eyes that it is useless."

Then he turned to his dictation.

"Go on, Montholon. We have no time to waste. Another attack may come at any moment."

Bertrand turned away and went into the garden to conceal his emotion. The spectacle of their chief's hopeless misery was too much for these devoted men, who wasted their lives in comforting him.

Presently, as he was pacing the lawn, a voice accosted the general:

"Good evening, count; you walk late."

It was Captain Gervaise.

"I walk to suit myself, sir," was the cold reply. "I am not a prisoner, as you are well aware, captain."

Gervaise laughed tauntingly.

"No, but you are subject to rules."

"What rules, sir?"

"Those of the governor. I am ordered to watch for suspicious movements on your part and frustrate them."

"What suspicious movements have you observed, sir? God knows his majesty is in no condition to make any."

"Perhaps not; but he may not be as ill as he professes."

"Sir, it is only necessary to look at him, to see that he is on the brink of the grave. Do you doubt it?"

"I doubt nothing. But I say it is too late for you to be abroad. I have seen suspicious movements to-night—lights at sea—signals—"

"Well, sir, and what of them?"

"Simply that I am going down to warn the guard-house, and that you must go into the house and remain there till I come back."

"And if I decline to submit to be treated as a child or a fool?"

"Then I shall put you all under sentries in your rooms, with the door open."

"You are exceedingly wise, sir. But suppose I go into the house as you suggest?"

"You will be left alone. It is not my habit

to annoy my prisoners, but I never give them a chance to annoy me."

Bertrand turned on his heel and went into the house. As he did so, he heard Gervaise say:

"Change your beat to the veranda, sentry, and let no one in or out till I come back."

"Very good, sir," was the reply. "Let no one pass, sir? Not even officers?"

"Our own, of course, if they come on duty, but no one else."

"All right, sir."

Then Gervaise went away, and when the count, for curiosity, tried at the back and side doors, he found a sentry at each, who said stolidly:

"Go back. No one to pass to-night."

So that Bertrand knew then that the captain must have obtained some inkling of the expected visit.

Meantime Gervaise mounted his horse and rode off to the governor's house, where he reported to Sir Hudson:

"There is a boat of some sort out at sea, by the end of Longwood Ravine, sir, making night signals to the French, who have answered from the window. What is your pleasure?"

"Keep a close guard, sir."

"I've ordered all into the house, sir, and I'll defy a mouse to get in."

"That is right, sir. Anything else?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is it?"

"I think, sir, it's about time an example were made of these people. If we could catch them in the act."

"Easily said, sir."

Sir Hudson's tone was dry.

"We have to fight fire with fire. It is a hard task to cope with the intellect of a man like Bonaparte; and his deluded followers are desperate for revenge."

"Still, sir, if I could take a few of them, it would terrify the rest."

"No doubt. But we cannot afford to risk anything. Our salvation is, that the general is really dying; so all the doctors say. The day he dies, will be a day of relief to me, I assure you. I am not fond of being abused by all the world, for doing my duty to my sovereign."

And Sir Hudson looked very angrily at a paper that lay before him, wherein he was severely satirized by the poet, Tom Moore, in the stinging lines beginning:

"Sir Hudson Lowe, Sir Hudson Lowe,
(By name and, ah! by nature so)."

The governor struck his fist on the paper, grumbling fiercely:

"Would you believe it, sir, this Irish nobody presumes to call me a lilliputian and make insolent comparisons between General Bonaparte and Gulliver, when the little people had him. It's infamous."

Gervaise looked sympathetic.

"It is the fate of all men who serve their country faithfully to be maligned, Sir Hudson; but if we can make a good *bona fide* capture of some of these French villains, it will offset hundreds such little squibs."

The governor grunted. He hardly thought so.

"Well, what do you want to do?" he asked at last.

"Permission to take some dragoons and patrol that valley. They came up there last time, and may do it again."

"Oh, I've no objection to that. Take all the men you want."

And Sir Hudson turned again to the obnoxious paper, though it was five years old. He could not get the lines out of his head.

Gervaise left the room; went to the barracks and roused up a dozen men, whom he ordered to follow him.

The island of St. Helena being only ten or twelve miles long, and six or eight broad, does not justify the use of cavalry to any great extent; but Sir Hudson Lowe had insisted on a troop of dragoons to use as orderlies and dispatch bearers, and their horses were so little used that they were always ready for a gallop.

Therefore, in less than ten minutes after leaving the citadel, the British officer found himself descending the steep path into the valley of Longwood, and riding slowly down toward the little guard-house at the head of the bay.

Leaving him there, it is time that we went to the guard-house ourselves before the captain reaches it, for peculiar events were taking place there at the time.

The guard-house stood on one side of a little rivulet, which emptied into a narrow and deep bay, and here was established a picket of a sergeant and ten men, whose duty it was to watch the bay, and keep off suspicious craft.

On this evening the fog came down on the bay as usual, clinging to the base of the cliffs, and the sentry had to patrol down by the water's edge, while another was stationed on the hill above the fogs, to watch the sea outside.

Had the night been a little clearer, this man's duty might have been performed usefully; but on this evening there was no moon, and a haze

hung over the top of the island, hiding the stars.

Consequently, the sentry could not see a small canoe, containing two men only, which glided into the fog while he was nodding at his post.

The two men were Jean Martin, the one-eyed cannoneer, and Albert Delmont, *alias* Don Alberto Del Monte, the Mexican.

"Now, my captain," whispered Jean. "We are in the bay as soon as we enter the fog. The stream is straight ahead, the guard-house on the bank."

"Very good; how's the tide?"

"Rising, my captain."

"Tumble the cask overboard then, but don't make a splash."

The two stooped down into the bottom of the canoe, and lifted out a small barrel, which they lowered gently into the water.

"What next, my captain?" whispered the veteran, softly.

"Tell me the topography of the valley. I never was in it."

Jean began:

"After you pass the guard house, follow the stream for half an hour. Keep in the fog, and no one will see you. The path to Longwood turns to the right about two miles up. You will know it by a group of weeping willows. Miss Mason's house is on the opposite side. At the foot of the path, and again at the head, is a sentry. Within the grounds there are more. It is a deuce of a place for sentries. That is why I had to take the ladder to the summer house. Gavroche, being my old friend, helped me."

"That will do," interrupted the other, sharply. "I only want the facts. Once in the grounds, I know my way. Wait here for me till an hour from dawn. If I do not come, go to the felucca. I shall be a prisoner, and that will mean death to me. In that case you know what to do. Divide the treasure and flee."

Jean Martin shook his head.

"No, no, captain; if they kill you, we will avenge your death on the English."

"As you please," returned the other, in a tone of indifference. "But I shall come back. You need not fear for me. I have a feeling that never deceives me."

While he spoke, he stripped off his outer garments, revealing a dark, close, woolen suit, thrust a long knife into his girdle, and lowered himself slowly into the water.

A moment later he was swimming slowly to shore, pushing the cask before him, till he felt his feet touch bottom, and saw the dim outline of the land through the fog.

Then he waited, holding the cask before him, till he heard a step, and saw the figure of an armed soldier pass by.

At the moment the sentry's back was to him, he gave the cask a shove to the beach, and stooped down so as to hide his head behind it.

The sentry noticed nothing, but continued his beat, and Delmont stole forward as the other receded, till he reached the shore, darted up the bank, and lay down in the long, dry grass to watch what would happen when the sentry came back.

He could hear the low buzz of voices, and see a red light in the fog some little way off, and knew it must be the guard-house; but he cared nothing for that. He was only watching the cask, which had now floated ashore, and was bumping on the beach.

Presently the sentry came back, and, as he had expected, stopped at the cask, turned it over, examined it, and finally called out:

"Sargent, dear, for the love o' God come here. Boys, all of yez, quick."

The watcher in the grass heard voices.

"What's the row?"

"What's Paddy McShane found?"

"It's the say serpent, I'll go bail."

Then came the trampling of feet, and one of the men nearly stepped on Delmont as he lay there, while they went down to the beach and gathered round the cask that had floated ashore.

"Oh, sargent, dear," he heard Paddy exclaim, in tones of anxiety, "what d'ye think's in it? Is it gunpowder, or is it one of them French infernal machines? Don't go nigh to it; it might blow up."

"Blow up be hanged," growled the sergeant. "It's a cask floated ashore from some vessel foundered in a storm. Powder would ha' gone to the bottom."

"Maybe it's 'Ollands gin," suggested another man with a smack of his lips. "If there's anything I'm fond of, it's 'Ollands gin."

"No it ain't," said the sergeant, decidedly, "cos they don't put 'Ollands in them little puncheons."

"Bedad," suggested Paddy, "maybe it's the rale ould stuff itself—potheen, God bless it."

"It's sperrits of some kind," said the sergeant, wisely, "or it wouldn't float. It ain't been long in the water, nuther, 'cos it's clean—no seaweed on it. Well, I suppose we'd better stave it, eh, boys? We don't want it."

He spoke with such obvious irony that the men chuckled, all but Paddy, who said, with great earnestness:

"Oh, for the love o' God, don't do it, sargent, dear. Sure 'twas the Holy Virgin herself

sent it to us to keep up our spirits. 'Twould be temp'in' Providence to spill a drop."

The sergeant laughed.

"Who'll go and get the tin cups?" he asked, at which there was a general rush for the guard-house, as the old soldier said to Paddy:

"Come; roll her along and we'll knock in the bung with a musket butt. We'll only taste what it's like."

"Ayah wisha, is that all?" cried Paddy; "and bedad it's meself that'll take a good strong taste, or I'm a Frinchman."

Then the listener smiled to see them roll the cask up to the guard-house, for in it were twenty-four gallons of brandy, with a pint of laudanum, and he knew that English soldiers, once beginning to drink, never stop short of beastly intoxication. As he had expected, it turned out.

The men tasted, pronounced it good, and finally shouted for the sentry on the bank to come down and try it.

One taste all round, and the bonds of discipline were loosened. The sergeant tried to exert his authority, but was cajoled into allowing "Just one good dram all round," and in this dram he drowned his own scruples. The post was not likely to be visited before morning, and he had an idea he would be "all right" by that time.

He and the men set in to drinking and telling stories, and within a quarter of an hour from the time the cask was set on end, they were all fast asleep.

Then Delmont went boldly up, shook and kicked them all round to make sure that they were really drunk, and then proceeded to call in Jean Martin, with whose assistance the whole party were stripped, tied neck and heels in the guard-house, and their guns made useless by throwing away the flints and wetting the charges.

"And now," said Delmont, "draw the canoe up on the beach. I didn't expect such a complete success. We can help each other. But remember, no firearms. If we die, we die; but a single shot throws away all our chances."

"I have obeyed orders so far," returned the old cannoneer, stiffly, "and I don't think I need lessons, Master Delmont. I cannot shoot, for the best of reasons. I have no pistol."

"So much the better," returned Delmont. "It is time we were in motion, if I am to see the emperor to night."

Jean Martin coughed.

"That is not likely," he muttered; but the young man stopped him.

"I have accomplished greater wonders than that before," he said. "You didn't believe we could find the treasure. I found it. You did not believe I could make a rocket beat a gun. You've seen it. Now I tell you I shall see the emperor to-night, and rescue him if he be able to move."

"Ah, that is it," said Jean, with a sigh; "but if you had seen him as I saw him, my captain, you would abandon all hope. Ah, it is terrible!"

Delmont stopped.

"Hearken!" he said. "If his majesty tells me with his own lips that he has given up life, I will believe it; but the man who conquered Europe alone shall not be shut up by England an hour longer than he pleases. To-night shall give him freedom. Now lead on and show the way."

Jean Martin stepped into the little stream and waded boldly up, following the bank for about a mile and a half through the fog, when he stopped suddenly.

The jingle of horse furniture was audible, coming their way.

Both men threw themselves down in the grass, and saw a party of horsemen ride by.

As they passed, Martin pinched Albert.

They could see the outlines of the horsemen, and the one-eyed cannoneer whispered:

"It is the officer who guards him. He has the eyes of a lynx. We are lost. He will come back and search, if not raise the alarm at once."

Albert shook his head.

"We are not lost," he said. "Lead on to the path to Longwood at once."

They passed through the fog till Jean said:

"There is the sentry. He will see us if we go any further."

"Stay here, then," said Albert; and with that he went down into the grass like an Indian, invisible in the darkness, and crawled close to the sentry, who was pacing mechanically to and fro, humming a tune to himself.

The young man crept up to a tree at one end of the sentry's beat and Martin saw him rise up behind it.

The sentry came forward and turned his back to resume his walk when Delmont put out his head.

Two steps more and the Frenchman came out from the tree, made one silent stride after the sentry and threw something at the back of the man's head with all his force, making a sound like the slap of a cricket ball caught by hand.

The sentry fell forward on his face and lay still while Delmont beckoned eagerly to his comrade to come forward.

Martin ran up and Delmont whispered:

"I stunned him with a stone, but he will come to in a moment. Gag him with his bayonet. Cut his belts off! Quick!"

With the rapid dexterity of sailors they tied up the sentry into a helpless body and hid him behind a tree just as they heard the jingle of horse-trappings again in the fog, coming at a gallop.

Delmont seized the sentry's musket and shako and said, hurriedly:

"Hide! only one is coming. I will hold him in conversation. Stun him as I did when you get a chance. Here's the stone: this is the spot to strike."

He placed his finger on the back of Jean's neck where the spinal cord leaves the brain, whispering:

"Hit hard when you see your chance. Hide."

A horseman rode out of the fog.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INTERVIEW.

THE approaching horseman was Captain Gervaise, who had been down to the bay, found the guard gone, and had at once used his patrol there and ridden off up the valley for more help, suspecting evil, but not what had happened.

As he came tearing up, Albert Delmont cocked his piece and called out:

"Halt!"

He was well aware of his deficiency in the English accent, and that it was impossible for him to hide his own, but he also knew what words to avoid.

Gervaise pulled up his horse at once, crying:

"For God's sake, sentry, no useless formality to-night. I'm Captain Gervaise. I passed your post, going out. There's a French plot going on, and I must get up to Longwood."

Albert only answered:

"Halt!" and raised his piece as if to fire; for he knew the other could see the outline of his form.

Gervaise, impatient and angry, retorted:

"What's the matter? Don't you know me? Have they changed the relief, while I was out?"

"Yes," said Delmont as shortly as he could, imitating the English accent.

"Then why the devil don't you go on? Do you want to keep me all night?"

And his horse made another step forward, when Albert shouted fiercely:

"Halt!"

And this time Gervaise obeyed, thinking he had to deal with a surly old soldier, who delighted in the night privileges of a sentry to bother his superiors.

"Well," he asked, presently, as Delmont stood silent, thinking over what words to use next, "have you nothing more to say?"

Albert suddenly remembered the Irish soldier, and the fact that Irish and French alike roll the letter R, which the English almost drop.

"Get off de horrrse!" he growled in a very respectable imitation of a thick brogue, which deceived Gervaise, who replied:

"Why the deuce couldn't you tell me before to advance and give the countersign on foot? I'll see your sergeant in the morning, and give you a couple of dozen to teach you sentry duty, my fine fellow."

Albert, seeing him advance on foot, knew that his time had come. The night was not so dark but that Gervaise, on a close look, could note the absence of white cross-belts; so he backed into the shade of a tree as the captain came forward, and halted him again within ten feet, so menacingly that the British officer recoiled, saying:

"Good Heavens! Are you drunk? What do you mean by this conduct?"

Delmont saw the form of Martin steal up from the foot of a tree behind the other, and feared that the one-eyed giant would execute his vengeance too soon; for it was important to him to get the countersign if possible.

So, pretending to be drunk, he growled out, pointing his piece:

"Countersign! Dam! Halt!"

Gervaise, fully convinced now that he had a drunken Irish recruit to deal with, spoke the word in a low voice:

"Salamanca, you rascal. Now let me pass, or it will be the worse for you."

Delmont, affecting to be satisfied, threw up his musket, and said, thickly:

"Pass! Pass!"

Then Gervaise, thinking his time had come at last to punish the man's insolence, strode forward and seized the musket, which Albert allowed him to do designedly, while the officer peered into the supposed sentry's face in the gloom.

The action brought his head forward to the desired angle, and Jean Martin, right behind him, brought down a round stone like a hammer at the nape of the officer's neck, repeating the blow quickly with such success that Gervaise dropped without uttering a cry, paralyzed and senseless.

They seized him and carried him down to the stream in the fog, stripped off his uniform, stuffed a wad of pieces of his own shirt into his mouth, bound him securely, and left him there, breathing heavily, while Delmont rapidly dressed himself in the British officer's clothing,

directing Martin to do the same with the clothes of the sentry.

Then he said to One Eye:

"So far, so good. But the dragoons are still in the valley. They are pretty sure to drink when their officer is away, unless he has spilt the liquor. We must go and find out what has been done. You stay here and stop any one coming the same way as I did. Keep them as long as you can till I come back."

Then he rode off down the valley toward the guard-house, and was halted in the fog by a dragoon shouting:

"Halt! who comes there?"

"Captain Gervaise!" cried Albert, who had the advantage of being able to mimic the absent officer's tones well.

"Advance and give the countersign," cried the man in answer, and Albert rode forward, saying, in a low voice:

"Salamanca."

"Countersign correct. Thought you was never coming, sir," replied the man, innocently. "We've found something since you've gone."

"Indeed?" said Albert, keeping a little away from the man, to avoid recognition.

"Yes, sir. There is an open barrel of brandy at the back of the guard-house, and I'm afraid the men have got at it."

"Aha! come on," said Albert, and he rode on to the hut, where the sound of voices in revelry satisfied him that the vedette's suspicions were correct.

He turned to the man.

"You like brandy?" he asked.

"Sometimes, sir," was the reply, "but I don't get drunk on duty."

Albert laughed, and ventured on a longer speech in English.

"Go drink! It all right. Go drink. I like to see men drink. Go."

The man seemed to be utterly amazed.

"Well, if you say so, I s'pose it's all right," he said, slowly. "Do you mean it, sir?"

"Yes, yes. Go."

The Frenchman imitated Gervaise's voice and manner so perfectly that his accent was unnoticed, and the orderly darted off to the guard-house, from whence Delmont soon heard the sounds of laughing and song, from which he rightly judged that the dragoons were safe to get as drunk as the foot soldiers before them.

He rode away up the valley just as the gun for taps was fired, and heard the bugle of the guard at Longwood sounding "Guard turn out."

"The relief is coming," he thought. "Now, if I can only get past that peril, I shall have two clear hours."

He had questioned Jean Martin closely on the habits of the guard at Longwood, for One Eye, during their former attempt, had spent six months on the island, most of the time at Miss Mason's, in the guise of a Spanish merchant, an invalid, who came to St. Helena for his health.

Miss Mason had taken him to board, and he had acquired information of the doings at Longwood obtainable in no other way than by daily observation, all of which he had imparted to Delmont.

Delmont knew that the sentries on the side of the valley were frequently slack, and that the corporal, to avoid a long climb, seldom marched the relief down himself, but sent the sentry alone to relieve his comrade.

He galloped up the valley and hid himself behind a tree, where Martin was walking his beat, and soon had the satisfaction of hearing the English sentry come down the path, calling:

"Tom, Tom, Ford. Where are ye?"

"Halt!" was Martin's only reply, to which the other answered:

"Oh, you be blowed with yer reg'lations. I see ye, and you know who I am. I say, Tom, old Jarvey's gone out to raise a row at the guard-house, ain't he?"

"Yes," replied Albert, as Martin stood by the tree which sheltered him.

"It's my opinion 'e's a hold bloat, and that's wot 'e is. 'E makes more fuss 'bout pore old Boney, as is a-dyin' by inches, nor if he was a accrybat as could get out of this bloomin' hisland on a tight-rope. 'Ad any 'arms, Tom?"

"No," returned Martin, who felt safe to say the word properly.

But the Englishman's ear noted the difference, and he retorted:

"What are ye tryin' to do, Tom? Talking like them Frenchmen? Well, I wish ye joy of the next two hours. You'll be snug in the guard-house, while I 'as to tramp it. Good-night. Give us the word. It warn't out at the guard-house when I was on."

"Come, den," said Martin, and the other, with an "Oh, stop tryin' that 'ere frog-talk, Tom," advanced to receive the word, and received, instead, another of those scientific taps on the back of the head from Delmont which laid him out, senseless.

They carried him down to the stream and left him there, secured and gagged.

Then the two comrades started to ascend the hill, Delmont riding, Martin following on foot.

After a steep climb they reached the top of

the hill, where they were challenged by a second sentry:

"Who goes there?"

"Captain Gervaise and rounds," replied the adventurous Delmont, who had arranged his plan of action.

"Halt, rounds! Advance one with the countersign," was the return.

Martin, in the English soldier's dress, gave the word "Salamanca," and they passed on.

Albert stopped at the sentry.

"Any alarm?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir, since you went out."

The disguised officer nodded to him and went on.

It behoved him now to exercise the utmost care.

Had he known what were Gervaise's orders to the sentries, he might not have felt so uneasy; but he had no means of knowing these, and had to proceed as before, on the theory of the rounds.

They passed four sentries in the grounds of Longwood, and in each case the word "rounds" and the name of Gervaise acted as a charm, till they came to the door of the house itself, and Martin whispered:

"They have drawn in the posts close to the house. What does it mean?"

"I will find out," said Albert. "Hold the horse."

He dismounted and approached the door.

The sentry challenged:

"Who goes there?"

"Captain Gervaise," was the reply.

"All right, sir," returned the sentry. "No one has been here since you went away, and the Frenchmen are quiet."

The disguised officer nodded, and went to the door, the man stepping aside and asking:

"Any more orders, sir?"

"No," replied Albert, briefly.

He didn't dare say much now, and felt thankful that there was no light to show his face as he went in.

In another moment he was in the house at Longwood, having passed every guard in a manner that surprised himself.

Of the interior arrangements of the house he knew nothing, but was aware that the emperor had quite a large retinue of French officers.

He moved along the passage till he saw a light under a doorway, when he knocked cautiously.

"Count Montholon came to the door, and Delmont saw the emperor within, with the Italian doctor Autoumarchi kneeling on one side, Bertrand on the other, both looking anxiously at Napoleon, who was groaning, as if in terrible pain.

Montholon, seeing the red uniform, said in a harsh tone:

"Captain, this is an intrusion."

Delmont raised his hand.

"For God sake," he said in a low tone "be cautious. I am Delmont. If his majesty be only strong enough to walk, we can carry him off to-night."

The quick-witted Frenchman's face lighted up for a moment as he grasped Delmont's hand, saying:

"Ah you are a wonderful man."

Then it fell again, as he added:

"But it is too late. Come in and see."

Then the daring adventurer, who had braved so many perils, entered, for the first time, the sick room of Napoleon, and beheld before him the wreck of the first man in the world.

The emperor lay back in his large wicker chair, the sweat pouring from his pallid face, his eyes glaring with the agony that forced groans from him, and Delmont knew then that the count had spoken the truth.

Bertrand and Autoumarchi barely noticed him, though they knew who he was and made way for him to look at the emperor.

"How long has he been so?" whispered the adventurer, huskily.

"About an hour. The attack is nearly over," returned Montholon. "He will know us presently, the doctor thinks."

In fact, in about five minutes from that time, the hollow groans of the sufferer died away; he closed his eyes awhile and appeared to sleep; then opened them with a faint smile, and said:

"Ah, you are very kind, all of you. What time is it, Bertrand?"

"Half-past nine, sire."

"I am better. But that was a hard fight. I fear I cannot endure many more. Where were we, Montholon? We must finish our work, you know. It was about the Russian campaign."

"Yes, sire."

"Take your seat then. We have time to finish a chapter to-night."

He was going back to his work, this man whom nothing appalled.

Then he lifted his eyes and saw Delmont. The sight seemed to displease him, for he said coldly:

"There was no necessity for your visit, monsieur. I will not trust the English doctors. They might poison me, and think they were serving their own country by killing her foe. I am better, I do not need you."

Delmont fell on his knees, sobbing:

"Oh, sire, it is not the English jailer who is

here, but your majesty's faithful servant Delmont. Oh, sire, if you could but walk a few steps, we could place you on the ocean at once, and be free of British bolts and bars forever."

The emperor looked at him steadily.

"Young man," he said, holding out his hand, "come hither."

In a moment Delmont was kissing his hand in a transport of emotion, while the attendants looked on sympathetically.

Even the emperor seemed moved, for a bright drop rolled down his cheek as he said to Bertrand:

"You were right, count, and I was wrong. There is such a thing as disinterested affection left. I can give him nothing, yet he loves me."

"Love you, sire! Oh, I would die to-night if I could but secure you a year of freedom."

"Young man," said Napoleon softly. "Freedom will soon be mine; but it will be God that sends it. I could not support the motion of a carriage if the English set me free and offered to drive me to the harbor. You see then that I was right when I told you, in answer to your signal, that it was too late."

Delmont bowed his head in sorrow, and the emperor went on.

"I made the mistake of my life in 1812. I thought I could conquer nature, as I had conquered men. Alexander fled before my eagles, but the Russian winter destroyed the Grand Army. Since then everything has been too late. Learn from me that men can be subdued but not nature. Now tell me; how came you here? And first, who are you?"

"A Frenchman, sire, Albert Delmont. I was a student at St. Cyr while you were trying to save France, and I graduated as an officer too late for Waterloo. The first duty I was ordered to perform was to command the firing party at Marshal Ney's execution."

The emperor interrupted him.

"Did you obey the order?"

"I did, sire. Hate me if you will—"

"You did right, young man. Soldiers must obey orders. Well, what next? What is this I hear of a legacy of Ney? I did not know he had property to leave."

Albert detailed as briefly as possible the story of Ney's legacy and the procurement of the lugger, at which the emperor smiled and said to Bertrand:

"Do you know that reminds me of the consulate and early days? I knew that Maret and Otrants were into that smuggling trade, but I had no idea that Ney was head of such a conspiracy. Proceed, monsieur."

Delmont detailed his first fight with the Penelope and the ruse by which he had been finally decoyed into the power of the British when the emperor said with a sigh:

"It was your destiny and mine. Had you come here four years ago, I might have made my escape; but it was not to be. Well, how did you escape?"

"My comrade and I stole the only boat the Penelope had left, sire, in which we floated, starving, for ten days, till a Spanish ship came and rescued us. Then we had all the work to do over again."

"What work?"

"To find the sunken reef on which the treasure galleons lay; to procure the money; to fit out our vessels to come here."

"And how did you do it?"

"By co-operation, sire. We went to the United States, where we found friends of France, and men ready to help your majesty. We communicated the secret under an oath to a band of brave souls, and by their assistance recovered the treasure. It lay in water twenty fathoms deep, and, but for certain American inventions, we should never have found it. The Americans are a wonderful people, sire. With an army of them we would renew the contest and conquer the world again, with you to lead us."

The emperor sighed as he said:

"It is too late. The time has passed. All that I can do now is to leave posterity a true account of the past. And you, my friend, what can I do to reward you for your faithful efforts in my cause?"

"Nothing, sire. My reward would have been to see your majesty once more at the head of an army; but as that may not be, I can only obey your majesty's orders. There may be some errand your majesty has to perform, some message to send which the English will not allow. Tell me, and I will perform it."

The emperor looked at him in a singular way, as he said:

"Young man, you know not what you are asking. You ask a discredited monarch to accept you as an instrument of his revenge on the foes who have beaten him."

Delmont's face lighted up.

"Oh, sire," he cried, "tell me how to revenge your cause on England for her perfidy and I will do your will to the letter. I have a head to plan enterprises, and I hate the English, but I know not how to hurt her most. You know, sire. Tell me and I will obey."

The emperor looked at him thoughtfully.

"You say, indeed, you have a head to plan,

my friend; but there is but one way to hurt England."

"And that, sire?"

"She is strong at home, weak abroad. She must be annoyed abroad. She must be engaged in small wars which cost money. Especially is she weak in the East. Had I been able to retain Egypt, I should not be here to-day. Egypt, hostile to England, means the end of the Indian empire."

Delmont knelt like the worshiper at a shrine, listening to the voice of an oracle, and then rose up slowly, saying:

"Does your majesty order me to go to Egypt?"

"I order nothing now, monsieur. But I say to you that the road to English ruin lies through Egypt. In the mean time you may smooth the few days I have left to live by sparing me further agitation, and doing what you can to preserve my name from falsehood. France will need no soldiers for another generation, and when she fights again it will be with a different Europe. I have shaken the thrones of hereditary right, and this century is yet young. Before its close—"

Bang! bang!

Two musket-shots outside the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WRECK.

At the sound of the shots all in the room started and looked round, save two persons—the emperor and Delmont.

The shots were followed by the sound of loud voices in English, amid which the tones of Jean Martin roared in French:

"Ah, rascals, take that!"

Then came more shots of pistols, easily distinguished from the heavier reports of the muskets, and Napoleon, whose marble pallor nothing disturbed, said:

"Young man, what is that?"

"My companion, sire," was the quiet reply. "It is better to end so. Since your majesty cannot escape, there is no further use for us. We may as well surrender."

The tumult outside grew louder and louder, but through all, the emperor preserved his calmness, saying:

"On the contrary, you are young and the night is dark. It is time you escaped. I order it."

In a moment Delmont's face changed to its usual expression of reckless daring.

"Your majesty shall see that you have men yet who can serve you," he said.

Then he bent and kissed the wan, wasted hand, and sprung to the door.

As he did so the front door of the house was burst open and a knot of English soldiers rushed in looking frightened, while the voice of Jean Martin roared after them in French:

"Ah! rascals, villains, I have you."

Then Delmont rushed out through the group, and found the lawn in front of the house full of soldiers, among whom the giant was raging with a clubbed musket, keeping the boldest at bay by his enormous strength, while a mounted officer rode round, shouting:

"Why don't you kill him? Shoot him down! Bayonet him!"

Into the midst of this scene rushed Delmont in Gervaise's uniform, wearing Gervaise's sword, crying:

"Silence. What is this?"

Jean Martin heard the voice, turned and ran like a deer across the lawn, shouting:

"A moi, capitaine! A moi!" [After me, captain! After me.]

In another moment he was in the dark plantations, and Delmont ran after, with the cry, in English:

"Catch him! Catch him!"

In the confusion he knew he would be taken for Gervaise, and the ruse had its effect.

As soon as the soldiers saw the giant run, they rushed after him, following the red coat of Gervaise, as they thought, and in another moment the whole party, in a regular mob, was going down into the valley of Longwood, while the sentries were firing off their pieces, and everything was confusion worse confounded.

Only one thing Delmont found as he ran. The English were not trying to come up with Martin. They were afraid of him, and willing to let the supposed men in the valley cut him off.

Thus, by the time the disguised officer reached the valley, he had run ahead of everybody, and soon saw the figure of Martin waiting for him, when the one-eyed giant said curtly:

"No time to talk. They nearly had us. If you had not come when you did, I should be a prisoner. Twenty to one is no joke. Come on, or the guard-boat will be on us."

They ran on down the valley, dropping their English clothes as they ran, and gained the little bay in safety.

The guard-house was silent, and they had no trouble in reaching their canoe, when Martin uttered a sigh of relief:

"Ah! that is lucky. Now, if only—"

As he spoke the fog was lit up as by a flash of lightning, and the boom of a heavy gun echoed among the precipices of the island, telling them the alarm was given.

The English had discovered the escape.

Jean Martin said nothing, but shoved off the canoe, and they paddled out into the fog toward the sea.

"When they were at the edge of the mist which clung to the foot of the cliffs, the one-eyed man suddenly said:

"I thought as much. There is the guard-boat, captain."

Not a quarter of a mile off, coming along the base of the cliffs, was a large boat, pulling twelve oars of a side, and coming toward them.

Delmont dipped in his paddle.

"Come on for a race," he said. "Straight to sea, and remember we have two grenades at the last."

The two men plied their paddles and the little canoe darted out to sea. Far away in the distance they knew were the American schooner and their own felucca, which had evaded pursuit in the night, and from which they had taken their departure.

Could they reach those vessels in time, or even make known to them their own situation, they might be saved; but the night was clear and starry on the sea, and they knew, from the shout that went up from the guard-boat, that the English had spied them and were coming in full pursuit.

They had a quarter of a mile start, the model of the canoe was keen, and they could hold their own for a while; but two men against twenty-four are overweighted as soon as they begin to tire, and both Frenchmen had had a long run from Longwood.

The chase kept up for about half an hour, when Martin said:

"If I could see the felucca, I should be very glad, captain. I worked too hard with those *rosbifs*."

Delmont cast a glance back.

The guard-boat was coming up, slowly but surely.

He ground his teeth and worked with renewed energy for another ten minutes, when he found his muscles trembling, and recognized the symptoms of failing wind and strength.

Martin, too, was failing and the men in the guard-boat raised a loud cheer as they saw they were gaining.

Delmont looked anxiously ahead over the sea, which was rolling in long waves, hiding the guard-boat at times.

"Oh, if I could only see the lights," he muttered.

But he had ordered those lights out himself, before he left the vessels.

Jean Martin turned and looked back.

"Ah, cursed English," he said. "You've got us; but we'll have revenge. Let them come, captain, and we'll use the grenades."

As he spoke, he laid down his paddle, and pulled from the little cupboard in the bow of the canoe, which was decked over fore and aft, two balls, one of which he handed to Delmont.

They were hand grenades.

Somewhat to his surprise Delmont threw his into the sea, saying:

"No, comrade. I have a better idea. We could not sink them, and they would treat us as pirates. Drop it into the sea."

Jean Martin resignedly obeyed.

"You are the captain?" he said, "but I, for one, like to die fighting."

Delmont interrupted him with a cry of joy, pointing ahead.

"Lights, lights! We are saved after all."

As they rose on a wave, they saw the light of the felucca ahead, not more than a mile off, and could even distinguish the outline of her lateen sails. She was coming in, full sail.

"She has heard the gun," panted Martin, as he and his chief plied their paddles, and though the guard-boat was now less than a hundred yards behind, they continued on their way with a strength that surprised themselves, till they heard a shot and a bullet went singing over their heads from the boat.

Martin laughed.

"Fire away all night, messieurs. A dark night and a dancing boat make poor shooting. Aha! what's that?"

A broad flash out of the sea ahead showed the canvas of a large ship astern of the felucca, and, the next moment, down came the broad lateen sail, when the canoe was not three cable-lengths away from her.

Jean Martin groaned.

"Ah! *mon Dieu*, the Muchachito is gone at last. It is one of those cursed brigs, or the *Arethusa*."

The men of the guard-boat had stopped rowing now, as if in doubt what to make of the shot, and the canoe went up to the felucca, which they found in shocking disorder.

A lucky shot from the ship astern had taken the mainmast, close to the deck, and the wreck of the sail was towing overboard, while the ship was coming up hand over hand.

The arrival of Delmont put an end to the confusion at once, and the clear-headed young Gaul ordered the wreck cut away, saying, encouragingly:

"We have a foremast and a mizzenmast, and the night to aid us. She cannot repeat that shot."

While the men were working with new spirit, the ship burned a blue light, and showed herself to be a full-rigged frigate. Jean Martin knew her at once.

"It is the *Penelope*," he cried. "Our old enemy has come back! Let us try another rocket in her sails."

At that moment the *Penelope* fired a second gun, having evidently burned the blue light to aim by.

The shot came skipping over the felucca between her masts, and Jean observed, laconically:

"Good line shot! Now my turn."

The crew, working like mad, had cut the mainsail from the yard, and thrown the wreck overboard, when the swift felucca began to draw away from her foe, as Martin fired a rocket, aiming at the ship's sails.

But alas for the dependence to be placed on Congreve rockets!

The composition in this one was in some respect faulty, and it drooped as it began its flight, the long tail-stick touching the sea, into which the erring projectile dived, hissing, as Jean cried, with a volley of curses:

"Ah, had that been a gun, 'twould not have served me so. Fool that I was to trust to these new-fangled weapons."

And the *Penelope* at the same moment fired a third gun, better aimed still, by the last gleams of the blue light, for, as the glare went out, they heard a crash aloft in the felucca, and down came the foreyard.

Their case was settled now, if never before. The crew fell into confusion, the frigate came rapidly up, and Delmont cried to his men:

"We have only to die like men now: get your arms; fight him to the last. Rockets, Martin. The Old Guard dies, but never surrenders."

Those words, false or true, had become famous in France, and the men gave a faint cheer as they rushed to the arm racks.

In five minutes more Martin had fired three rockets, and every one had missed the ship, which had come up to within a few hundred yards, when she suddenly yawed, and fired her whole battery on the starboard side into the dainty little yacht, loaded with grape and canister on top of the round shot.

The effect was fearful.

The men went down in heaps of dead, and the survivors leaped overboard in terror, all but two—Jean Martin, the one-eyed cannoneer, and the young chief.

They stood up, saved as by a miracle, and saw the great ship come bearing down on their helpless wreck amidsthips, while they awaited their fate with the stoic calmness of despair.

Only Martin held out his hand to his captain, saying:

"Good-by, captain; all is over."

Delmont measured the ship with his eye, and he wore the same look of reckless audacity as ever.

"One comfort," he said, "we are sinking, and they will not get the marshal's legacy. If you wish to live, there is a chance yet."

"What is it?"

"Leap for the ship's bobstays as she comes over us. Now!"

As he spoke they felt the little vessel sink under their feet and saw the towering bow of the frigate loom over them in the air.

Then came a crash as the cutwater struck the wreck of the *Muchachito* amidsthips, and both men sprung up and clung to the ropes under the ship's bowsprit.

Lithe, strong and active as they were, it was easy to swing themselves up to a position of temporary safety, and then they were heaved aloft on a billow and plunged into the heart of another as the vessel wore round in the midst of the heads of the wretched swimmers from the lost yacht. And then they heard the loud, stern voice of Captain Wright shout through the trumpet:

"Don't cast a rope! Not a hen-coop! Let the cursed pirates drown! I've got them at last!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER THE BOWSPRIT.

DELMONT, clinging for his life under the bowsprit of an enemy's ship in the night, yet heard that voice, and cursed under his breath, saying to Martin:

"It is he, the traitor! If he finds us we shall have short shrift. But he will not find us! I'll hang that man yet!"

And One Eye, the cannoneer, ground his teeth and growled:

"Ay, ay, we'll do it some day; but when?"

They could not hold any further conversation just then, for the pitching of the ship sent them under water, and they began to wonder where they were going.

Also they were surprised that no notice was taken of them by the forward lookout at the knight-heads. Looking up against the sky, they could distinctly see every rope of the huge vessel that towered above them, but no one seemed to be looking down over the bows, and every time the ship plunged they were buried in the water, while her rising bow tossed them in the air, so that they had to cling close to the dol-

phin-striker to avoid being thrown off into the ocean.

When they obtained a glimpse of the surroundings from the top of a wave nothing but open sea was visible, and from this both concluded that the *Penelope* must be working away from the island out to sea.

Where she was going they knew not. Nothing but the instinctive love of life made them retain their hold, for a more hopeless position could hardly be found. That week they had enjoyed a triumph. They had chased the British cruisers from the sea round St. Helena and reduced the island to a state of siege.

Now, by a chapter of accidents, against which they had never provided, they were reduced to a state of complete destitution.

Their vessel, in which they had taken such pride, was at the bottom of the sea; the treasure they had rescued from the Spanish galleons had gone with it; and two men, clinging under the bows of a British frigate in a stormy sea on a dark night, were the sole remnants of an expedition that would have saved the emperor had he consented to be saved by his followers.

Pretty soon, as they clung to their precarious post, they became sensible that the wind was increasing. A black cloud came sailing down on them with a heavy squall in its depths, and they heard the hoarse shout of the officer of the deck:

"Hands shorten sail! Topgallant clewlines! Clew up and furl!"

Then a heavy plunge nearly tore Delmont from his hold, and he made signs to Martin that they must go higher.

To go higher was to run out of one danger into another.

Escaping the peril of suffocation, they would run the risk of being seen from the ship's deck.

A second more violent plunge decided them on the alternative.

They had been sitting astride on the lowermost chain of the bobstays holding to the spar called the "dolphin-striker," and the next time the vessel plunged each caught hold of the chain next above him and climbed up to the next tier.

There were three lines of chain under the bowsprit of the *Penelope*, and the third, owing to the rise of the bowsprit, was above the level of the deck.

The second tier gave them a little more ease for a while; but as the squall increased in violence, they had to climb to the third, right under the bowsprit, from whence they could see the white deck of the ship and the crew at work.

Every one seemed to be too busy to look out under the bowsprit, and as more than one sea came aboard the *Penelope*, the watch had too much to do to take care of themselves to think of anything else, and our heroes had a short rest.

"Where is she going?" whispered Jean Martin, one time, in a lull. "And where is the schooner of our friend Norton? Can it be possible this ship is looking for her?"

Delmont nodded his head. He had his back to the frigate, and was peering into the darkness for the schooner, while Martin, facing him, watched the ship.

The schooner belonged to an American named Norton, a native of North Carolina, who made Delmont's acquaintance in Baltimore, and had always a romantic desire to be associated with him in his scheme to deliver Napoleon.

Indeed, outside of the British ministry at that date, there seemed to be but one sentiment in the civilized world as to the exile of St. Helena, that of pity and admiration, and in America, especially, the animosity toward England remaining from the war of 1812-14 made the feeling of sympathy unusually warm with England's old foe.

The schooner had been in company with them at dark, and Delmont had supposed she had doubled in company with the felucca when they stood back to the island.

But, look as they might, there was no sign of the schooner in the darkness of the squall, and when that wore out its fury the stars came out again, and the frigate dashed along under a stiff breeze, while the sea seemed absolutely void of sails.

Now that it was clear, the adventurers could perceive the mountains of St. Helena looming up like a cloud astern of the ship, and they flattened themselves upon the spar to which they clung, to avoid any observation from the deck, while the voice of the officers and men in the frigate were borne plainly to their ears, the ship being before the wind.

It was a strange sensation to these daring men to be so close to their enemies and hear their unguarded remarks. Delmont, in the natural recklessness of his disposition, was disposed to make light of the peril; but Jean Martin's face was grave and anxious.

Presently they heard the following words:

"I say, Tom, what do you think of our leaving those poor fellows to drown?"

"Confounded barbarity," was the emphatic answer. "Never knew a British ship to do such a thing before."

"Nor I neither. Skipper must feel as bitter

as a fellow who's been jilted. One thing, we'll have no more trouble with that confounded felucca. She's gone to the bottom, safe enough."

"I don't know that."

Both listeners started violently and the other man answered:

"Well then, you can't believe your eyes. I believe mine, and I know we ran over her."

"Yes, but you were too busy to look astern as I did."

"Well, what of that, Tom?"

"A good deal. I saw more than twenty men swimming in our wake."

"Poor devils. They couldn't swim long. The squall was coming down, and we were a good ten miles from shore."

"That wasn't all I saw."

"Well, what did you see?"

"I'll tell you, if you'll promise not to report to the skipper."

"You forget, sir," said the other officer, in a sharp tone, "that we have our duty to perform. I insist on your telling me what you saw. I'm officer of the deck."

"And it is my watch below," interrupted the other, sharply. "I know my duty, Mr. Malcolm, without your instruction. If you want to come regulations over me, good-night; but I thought I was speaking to a friend, Donald Malcolm."

They saw the two officers separate, one striding angrily off, when the other said:

"Come, come, Chumley, don't get huffy. I was only joking. I won't tell the skipper, 'pon my honor. What was it you saw?"

"I don't think I shall tell you now," said Chumley, coldly. "It might have been only fancy, after all. I don't profess to see anything that escapes the vigilance of the officer of the deck."

Then they saw Malcolm go to him in a coaxing way:

"Come, Tom, old fellow, I beg your pardon. Isn't that enough?"

"Well, yes, Donald. All right. But your idea of telling the skipper what I saw would be—"

"What, Tom?"

"Infernal cruelty. He'd go back and pick up the poor wretches to be tried as pirates, and I, for one, rather admire their pluck."

"Why, Tom, do you really mean that they had a chance for life?"

"I mean more. The wreck of that poor felucca floated up after we had passed her several cable lengths. She must have been very light. It is true, I only caught a glimpse of her, and the hull hardly floated above the level of the sea, but it floated."

"Then we shall see it in the morning."

"I hope not."

"Why?"

"Because it's sure to be covered with the poor Frenchmen, and I think they ought to have a chance for their lives."

"Do you know, Tom—"

"Well, what is it? Say it out."

"You're talking—"

"What? Mutiny?"

"Not exactly; but—"

"Treason then?"

"No; one can hardly call it that."

"Well, what then?"

"It's disobedience of orders."

"No it isn't. I've no orders to report what I saw astern."

"But we were sent here on a duty—"

"I know we were. Confounded mean-spirited duty, too, watching for brave men in time of peace to hang them if they sympathize with the grandest man in the world."

Malcolm started back.

"My God, Tom, is it possible you're turning Bonapartist?"

"No. But I can't help admiring genius, even in an enemy, and I say that we ought to deal lightly with these poor fellows. What have they done, after all?"

"Tried to carry off a prisoner of war."

"He's no such thing. The war ended five years ago. It's peace everywhere. Who ever heard of a nation making war on a single man, except he were a pirate?"

"Well, Tom, I won't pursue this talk with you. I swear I never heard you express such sentiments. One would think you were a Frenchman."

"I'm not," returned Tom, in a tone of suppressed vehemence, "but I swear there are times when I feel ashamed to be called an Englishman, under our present government."

Then he turned away to the other side of the quarter-deck, and they saw him lighting a cigar and smoking in short, quick puffs that showed he was trying to calm his excitement.

As for the listeners under the bow of the *Penelope*, they were divided by hope and fear. They saw they had a friend in the ship as far as sentiment went, and it tempted them to hope.

But, when they reflected on the sternness of naval discipline, and that this very man was an officer of a British frigate, they felt they had little to hope.

One thing they noticed about the whole conversation, that the speakers did not seem to be

afraid of being overheard by the ship's company when they used such loud tones, and Martin whispered:

"We have friends where we did not think it, captain. These men hate their chief."

Delmont nodded.

"Did you understand them?"

"Certainly, my captain; but I cannot fit my Gascon tongue to those ugly English vowels."

"Do you know what I think, Jean?"

"No, captain; what?"

"That we have been seen by that officer, if not by others, and that he meant to let us know it."

"Heavens, captain!"

"I feel sure of it. We can see the deck plainly. Why does not the lookout at the knight-heads look out over the bow?"

"He may, yet, captain."

"Well, I have a suspicion—"

"Look out there!" called the officer of the watch, as if to confirm him. "What's the matter with you? Are you asleep?"

"No, sir," answered a voice, not twenty feet away, as a sailor rose up.

"Then why are you not at your post?"

"I am, sir."

"I didn't see you."

"I was sittin' down, sir. I can see jest as well that way."

"Well, stand up till I relieve you. The service is going to the devil with you lazy lubbers before the mast."

"Ay, ay, sir," growled the sailor; and he took his post, staring right over the heads of the two Frenchmen, who remained as still as if they were part of the spar.

Presently they saw the man look aloft and out on either bow, then turn his back to them and glance back at the quarter deck, when he said in a low voice to some one in the shadow of the bulwarks:

"The poor beggars is there yet, Jim. I swear I don't like to report 'em, but if Scotchy comes forrard to look, it's all up with them."

Delmont pinched Martin.

A grumbling voice answered:

"Why in blank don't they get under the old woman's arm? Them frog-eaters ain't sailors, nohow. They might stay hid till all's blue, if they knowed enough."

Delmont touched Martin.

"They are friends," he muttered. "The advice is well meant. Come."

He slipped down the spar while the sailor kept his back turned, and he and Martin found themselves once more on the lower bobstays, up which they crawled to the very cutwater of the ship, above which stretched out the huge figure-head of the crowned woman, who represented the Queen of Ithaca, at least ten feet high.

Her arms were outspread, holding a scepter and globe, steadied by iron rods, and, as the sailor had said, there was a place under the arms where they could wedge themselves in, secure from view on deck, and prevented from falling by the braces that kept the image in its place under the buffeting of the sea. True, it was a precarious post, for in a heavy sea it was under water at every plunge; but at present the waves only touched the feet of the image at intervals, and it was more comfortable than clinging to the dolphin-striker. It had the disadvantage that they could hear no voices on board unless a shout was given; but neither could they be heard themselves.

"You see," observed Delmont, "fortune has not deserted us yet. We have friends."

Martin grunted.

"Yes, English. Who knows what will be our fate in the morning?"

"To-night we are safe. Let to-morrow take care of itself."

"Since we cannot help ourselves, my captain, we will permit it to do so."

Then they secured themselves behind the braces in a sitting posture, on the platform at the feet of *Penelope*, and Delmont said:

"Martin, I am going to sleep."

"To sleep, captain?"

"Yes; why not?"

"In this position, captain? I should say you would be too anxious."

"Can you tell me what better we can do?"

"We can watch."

"True; but one can do that. We may both need sleep before long."

"Well, captain, I must say you are a cool hand. Who would think—"

"Think what, Martin?"

"That you came to sea, a soldier, green as the grass in Normandy."

"Ah, but you forget something."

"What, captain?"

"That I had you to teach me the lore of the sea, my friend. I am about to do credit to your training. Good-night."

Martin growled.

"Good-night, captain, I wish I had my pipe and matches here, but the cursed frigate gave me no time to go below and look for them."

"Smoking is said by doctors to be injurious to the constitution, Martin. See how kind is Providence, to help you break a bad habit."

They were both jesting to keep up their spir-

its, and even this failed them at last, when they sunk into silence and listened to the wash of the sea below.

Delmont tried to sleep, but could not any more than Martin, and kept looking out for the expected schooner, which came not; and so the night wore on, till the older sailor said in a low tone:

"There comes the dawn, captain."

Delmont roused up from a sort of doze, and looked ahead.

The frigate, heading due east, was running into the rosy light of one of those dawns seen nowhere so beautifully as in the tropics, at sea.

The edge of the horizon was already flushed with a ruddy stain, fading into violet and purple higher up in the sky.

As they looked, came a fleck of gold, catching the edge of a pearly cloud near the sea, and the sparkle was flashed back from a wave ahead into their faces.

Anon, the whole eastern heaven lit up with a scarlet flush, and the bright points of gold spread further and further, till one could almost see them catch the clouds, like tongues of fire in a rising conflagration.

A little later and the scarlet changed to orange, thence to intense gold, while red and purple receded over to the zenith and the west, till all the sky was aflame with color, and the sea looked like an ocean of molten gold.

"Oh," murmured old Martin; "I never thought so common a thing as daylight beautiful, captain; but this is more like heaven than earth."

Delmont smiled faintly.

"Perhaps you never saw it under the same circumstances, Martin. For my part, I can only think that it makes us more visible to any one crossing our bows."

He had hardly spoken when they heard something knocking against the image, and, looking up, saw a square bottle dangling on a string and coming down.

Delmont's face lighted up.

"We have friends," he said.

Then he reached out and took the bottle, giving the string a tug, at which it was released and fell into the sea.

Around the neck of the bottle they found a paper, on which was written, in a sprawling, common-looking hand, the following consolatory message:

"We're all for you. Old Crabs is asleep. Stay where you are till dark. Then we'll drop a line and take you into the hold. There's grub in the bottle. We'll send drink as soon as we dare, when Old Crabs is below. YOUR FRIENDS."

Delmont looked at the writing. It was apparently that of a rude sailor, but the spelling was good, though the language was slangy.

"No sailor wrote that," he said. "Some officer is in it, most likely a boy, one of the midshipmen, perhaps, who has disguised his hand to escape punishment if detected. Martin, I begin to suspect something."

"What is that, my captain?"

"That all Englishmen are not rascals."

Martin looked more than half incredulous.

"We shall see," he said. "Who knows if they haven't put poison in the bottle?"

Delmont smiled.

"Let us see," he replied.

He broke it on one of the braces, and found it stuffed full of small pieces of sea biscuit and salt pork, crammed in through the wide neck.

"At least," he said, "I shall try it. As for poison, they could have killed us before this if they had wanted."

And he began to eat, with the appetite of a man who has shivered all night, just as the sun shed a blaze over the sea as it rose.

Martin, spite of his antipathy to the hated English, could not resist the eatables long, and the two fugitives or stowaways, whichever they may be called, enjoyed a hearty breakfast under the figure-head of the Penelope.

When it was over Martin remarked, more graciously:

"After all, there are some brave men among the English."

Delmont smiled.

"And as we have eaten their bread, we can hardly abuse them all."

At that moment the echo of a distant gun, off on the starboard beam of the ship, caused them to start, and Martin craned his neck round the figure-head to look.

Presently he said:

"My faith, captain, it is the other frigate that chased us; but where is the schooner? I see her not."

Far off on the southern horizon they could see the sails of a ship visible down to her courses, with the square outlines of a ship-of-war in the cut of her canvas.

As they looked, she yawed widely, and began to signal the Penelope.

CHAPTER XIX. THE CHASE.

THE frigate was signaling, and they could not understand what she said; but the result was soon apparent, for the ship, on which they were, wore round and laid her head for the stranger.

"Now," said Delmont, "we need something to

hide us. As soon as we come in view from the decks of that vessel they will notice us."

Martin looked up and round him.

"I have an idea," he said.

"What is the idea?"

"We must hide."

Delmont looked up and saw that there was just room to squeeze in behind the mantle of the figure, with only his head exposed; but, to stay there, it was necessary to stand upright all the time, supported on a fold of the carved drapery of Penelope.

"The sooner we do it the better," he said.

So they climbed into their new position, and found themselves concealed so well that Martin said:

"Faith, captain, we can make a whole voyage this way, if we wish."

"I fancy it will not be a long one, Jean."

"I hope not, captain."

"I am sure of it."

"Why so sure?"

"Because these Englishmen will not want to hide us long for their own sakes, and we must ultimately go to the harbor of St. Helena."

"That is true, captain."

Then they relapsed into silence, watching the other ship which they followed:

No change of position occurred for some hours, when Martin suddenly exclaimed:

"My faith, a sail, and she looks like the Belle of Baltimore."

Delmont started and looked.

A white sail was indeed plainly to be seen, and it bore the outlines of a large fore-and-aft schooner, under jib and mainsail, standing across their course.

"It is the Belle," said Delmont, decidedly.

"She must have missed us in the night, and is cruising after us."

Indeed the strange schooner seemed to be in no hurry; for they approached her rapidly and were soon within two miles, the leading ship shortening sail to enable them to come up.

As they reached the frigate at last the men under the bowsprit could see the black hull, grinning ports, snowy hammocks and trim spars of a fifty-gun ship, with the marines drawn up on her deck, the men at quarters and a glittering group of officers abaft.

"It is the Andromeda," said Martin. "She was in Baltimore a year ago, and they said she was built on purpose to beat the American frigate Constitution, but the war closed before she was launched. She has thirty-twos and sixty-eight-pound carronades."

"And what has the schooner?" asked the other quickly.

"Her long gun is a forty-two; that is all, captain."

Delmont stirred restlessly.

"I wish we were on board," he said.

"So do I."

"Listen: the captains are going to speak."

They saw the captain of the Andromeda raise his trumpet to hail.

"Penelope ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" roared the voice of Wright. "What is it?"

"What did you do last night?"

"Sunk the pirate," roared Wright.

"What pirate?"

"That felucca, curse her."

"Save any of her crew?"

"Not a cursed French dog. Drowned every mother's son of them."

They saw the other captain take his trumpet down and look shocked. He said something to one of his officers, and then called out:

"The schooner ahead. Do you know her?"

"Ay, ay, the pirate's consort."

"She hoists the American flag."

"Let her hoist what she pleases," roared Wright. "I'll settle her hash if I get her under my broadside."

The other captain hesitated a moment and then called out:

"It won't do!"

"What won't do?" cried Wright, fiercely.

"To fire on that schooner," was the answer.

"Heave to, and I'll come aboard."

"I'll do no such thing," roared Wright. "I know my duty, Lord Charles; and when I see a pirate I'm going to fire on her if I sink my ship."

The other captain, a handsome young man as they could now see, made a gesture of impatience.

The two ships had drawn so close now that one might have thrown a biscuit on board either and the trumpets were not needed, as the other cried:

"I tell you it won't do. That fellow is waiting for us; flag flying; and it will be an international affair if we fire at him. Let us sail up and speak to him peaceably. If he's all right, so much the better. If there's anything suspicious, he can be taken in."

"Lord Charles Paget," they heard Wright say in answer, "I rank you, and I order you to follow my ship and help me sink that pirate."

Lord Charles bowed stiffly.

"Since you put it that way," he replied, "I can only obey, but the responsibility will be yours."

"Responsibility be hanged," roared Wright. "You obey orders."

Then the listeners saw Sir Charles turn away, and the Andromeda fell off across the stern of the Penelope, both taking their course for the schooner. The latter waited till they were within a mile or less, when she hoisted her gaff foresail, and set her flying jib. At the same moment a gun belched out fire and smoke from the side of the Penelope, and a shot went straight toward the Belle of Baltimore.

But for a lucky wave, she would have been hulled.

As it was, the shot skipped up, and, by a strange coincidence, took the flag at the schooner's peak, and dropped it into the sea.

"Eh, *mon Dieu*," muttered Martin. "The English are learning to shoot."

The schooner, in reply, set both her gaff-top-sails, and sailed away, leaving the frigates fast behind her.

"Now," said Delmont, "we shall see if Norton has the stuff of the Constitution in him or not. He is drawing out of range, even of the Andromeda."

This was proven soon after, when the Penelope fired a second shot, which fell short, and was followed by a gun from the Andromeda, so badly aimed that Delmont observed:

"That man does not want to strike."

The schooner continued to draw ahead, till Delmont said, quietly:

"This is his range, if he means to fight. The forty-two will just do it."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when the black hull of the schooner was hidden by a white cloud, and a shot came straight for the Penelope, so well aimed that Martin cried out:

"Eh, *mon Dieu*, let us get out of the way first, my friend."

But as one cannot do this at sea the shot came tearing on as if to strike the very figure-head behind which they had hidden, and they heard a crash like thunder overhead, followed by groans and cries.

But this was not all.

Hardly was this noise over when a tremendous crash was heard and the foremast of the frigate fell over the bow under the pressure of the sail, in a mass of ruin, in the midst of which Delmont said to Martin:

"If this goes on we will have to swim for it. Even brave men cannot stand it without feeling incensed at us as the cause of it all."

"I wish we had a boat," answered Jean Martin, ruefully.

But they had none, nor any chance of one, so they could only cower close and listen to the cursing of officers and sailors on deck, while the Penelope, reduced in a moment to a helpless wreck, incapable of pursuit, repaired her damages.

As soon as the wreck was cleared away, the concealed men saw the Andromeda coming down to their assistance, and overheard the following dialogue:

"Any harm done, Wright?"

This was sarcastic, and Wright retorted in a like spirit.

"Nothing except to make an excuse for foolish questions."

"Do you want any help?"

"To repair damages? No, sir. I should go to an older seaman than your lordship if I did. If you want to help me, go and sink that pirate."

"But I can't catch her, Wright."

"No, nor hit her either, it would seem. I thought you studied this new-fangled naval gunnery, Lord Charles; but your men fire as if they couldn't hit St. Helena unless you anchored the ship at the quay with her broadside bearing."

"Well, what damage has he done?"

"Carried away my foremast, curse him, with his long tom. Give him a broadside, Paget, for very shame, if you call yourself an Englishman."

"My heaviest gun is a thirty-two, Wright, and that fellow has ten pounds and a good furling distance to spare over me. I don't want to be picked to pieces without being able to reply, by an enemy I can't catch when there's no war to justify the risk."

And then the Andromeda backed her maintop-sail and lay to beside the other ship, while the two men under the bows saw the schooner edge away in a large circle, and sail in the direction of St. Helena.

"Now," said Delmont quietly, "what I wished has happened. We shall be followed and rescued."

"How do you know, my captain?"

"Because, unless that officer told a lie to torture us, the bulk of the Muchachito still floats, and some of our men are on her, out of sight of St. Helena. The schooner will pick them up."

"And what then? They do not know."

"Be not too sure of that. Some of them must have seen us, as we clung to the bobstays. If they tell Norton he will come after us, though he would not come to the island with us. I am getting thirsty. I wish the sailors would keep their promise to send us down some drink."

But the sailors had forgotten all about them in the excitement of the fight, and it was not for

hours afterward that they heard the clink of a bottle, and saw it hanging down by the image. The bottle contained some rum and water, and had another label on the neck.

"This is the last. The men say you must get off in the night or starve. They dare not help you any more. One of the officers threatens to report if you are here at daylight to-morrow."

It was late in the afternoon when they received this missive. The schooner had vanished, the *Andromeda* was off to the southeast, five miles away, and the breeze had sunk to a gentle zephyr, while the *Penelope* forged slowly through the water, and her crew were busy on deck repairing the shattered foremast.

Martin scratched his head and looked at Delmont dryly.

"These brave Englishmen, it seems, bear malice after all, captain."

"So I see."

"Well, so much the worse for them."

"Why, Martin?"

"Because I had made up my mind, if I got off, to let them alone."

"And now—"

"If I do get off and get aboard the *Belle* of Baltimore, I shall not rest easy till I have sunk the *Penelope*."

And Martin added:

"I never said this before. You did, and had given up the design—"

"You mistake. I never said so."

"No, but I saw it in your eye. You are too young to resist madness, captain."

"You are mistaken, Martin. I have a duty to perform, and I will do it yet."

"What is it?"

"To hang this butcher Wright from his own yard-arm, if it be standing. If not, from the gaff of the *Belle* of Baltimore."

It was singular to see these two men not yet released from peril of life, thus coolly planning what seemed an absurd scheme of impossible vengeance; but Martin never laughed. He only held out his hand.

"Touch my hand, captain. I swear it—that is, if Norton's scruples do not prevent us doing it."

"Norton will not. I have a way to prevent him from opposing us."

"And that is?"

"To buy the *Belle*. Norton will sell her to us, and we will sail her under our own flag."

"You forget, captain, we have no money left. It all went down in the poor little *Muchachito*."

"The *Muchachito* did not go to the bottom, and if she floats, we can get the treasure and buy the *Belle*."

"True, my captain."

Then he laughed and added:

"Who knows? We may be counting our chickens too early."

"That depends on God, Martin, and he has not deserted us, or we would be dead."

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE SEA.

THE afternoon wore on into evening and the sun set, when the *Penelope* had got up fresh spars and looked as trim as ever, thanks to her powerful crew and the tireless energy of Wright.

The vengeful Briton, with all his malignity, was a splendid seaman and infused his own spirit into his men.

The foremast had gone near the cap, and a new cap had to be made, the shrouds cut and spliced, the topmast refitted, and everything done in a hurry. But four hundred men, working under a skillful master, will perform what seem wonders to a landsman, and by sunset the frigate was moving again, with a foremast shortened by twelve feet, but otherwise unharmed.

The *Andromeda* was hull down to windward, St. Helena twenty miles astern, when the *Penelope* hauled her wind and stood in to the island under a gentle breeze and a cloud of sail.

The schooner was nowhere visible, but the two comrades under the figure-head hoped that she would hover round the land in the dark, looking for the felucca, and they felt satisfied to stand in for shore.

As the time wore on they both felt very sleepy and nodded on their perches, till Martin suddenly woke with a start and ejaculated:

"Heavens, captain; there are the lights of Jamestown. We are near the harbor."

Delmont looked up at the stars, and saw that the Southern Cross was nearly perpendicular in the sky:

"It is nearly midnight," he said.

Then he looked ahead and saw the dark hills of St. Helena looming up and the lights of Jamestown down at the edge of the water as Martin had said.

"It is almost time we slipped off I think, captain," observed his comrade. "If we strip we can swim ashore, and hide somewhere till the schooner comes."

Martin nodded, and they undressed them-

selves on their narrow perch, for a three mile swim is not so easy at the best of times that the incumbrance of clothing is to be courted.

They were within a mile of the points that bound Jamestown Harbor when Delmont said: "Now!"

At the word both dived straight down from the end of the bobstays, and struck out away from the ship; swimming as quietly as they could.

They saw several heads look over the side of the ship, but no one said a word, and Delmont whispered:

"They're glad were gone. Get out of sight of the quarter-deck."

On they went, and the huge hull of the frigate receded from them in the darkness, till they found that they were alone between great smooth walls of water, that made them wonder how they had thought the sea to be calm when they were under the bowsprit.

But a man on the level of the sea, and one above it, see very different views, and they knew that what looked to them liquid mountains, were waves about two feet high.

They directed their course toward the land, following the ship, till Jean Martin observed:

"We are losing the lights, captain. A current is carrying us off."

"In that case swim with the current," was the composed reply. "It is useless to stem it, and we can get ashore further on, by good swimming."

On they went till the lights of Jamestown were hidden by the point, and Martin observed uneasily:

"This current is going out to sea, captain. What shall we do?"

"Swim," was the curt reply. "When I see that we cannot reach land I shall float till I give out."

In a very few minutes more it became certain that Martin was right.

The current was taking them away from the land, out to sea.

As soon as he saw this, Delmont said:

"Courage, comrade, I am going to rest, and let the current bear me."

With that he turned on his back spread out his arms, and both men allowed themselves to float silently along, looking up at the stars.

In this way they lay for a long time, till Martin said gloomily:

"It is a question of hours. The sea is calm now. If it rises, we are lost."

"It is not likely to rise, comrade; it is a clear night. Have patience. At least if we sink we die at the hands of God, not of the English."

Martin groaned.

"I wish we were still under the bows of the Englishman, captain."

Delmont laughed.

"A great confession. Then you have given up your schemes of vengeance?"

"I see no chance of our ever realizing them, captain."

"On the contrary, I do not despair. Here we are resting on a couch so soft that we can never be hurt by it."

"And cold as ice, captain."

"No; cool and pleasant, after the hot sun of the tropics. Then look above us. Saw you ever such lovely stars?"

"I see them every night, captain."

"But then you are busy. You have no time to look at them. Now we have nothing else to do. Do you notice how this Southern Cross, by its inclination, makes a great natural clock, so that we can tell what is the time as if we had the best watches from Paris in our pockets?"

"You're a cool hand, captain. I believe you would talk philosophy in the presence of death."

"The very time to talk it, Jean. What is our philosophy worth if it will not console us now? See how little are we two in the midst of nature. We sink and are lost in the infinity of the universe. My friend, we could not die amid grander scenes."

"But I don't want to die, captain."

"Nor I, Jean; such is the weakness of our poor humanity. But look at the stars. Conceive us dead and our freed spirits mounting there. Would you not like to find out what the stars are made of, Jean Martin, surnamed *Le Borgne*?"

"I'd sooner go without knowing, if I could touch even a plank, captain. I feel I'm getting tired—"

"Nonsense. It tires no one to float."

"You mistake, captain. I am old and bony, and I am tired of breathing so hard. When I let out my breath I sink, and the water threatens my nose. In a little while I shall get frightened. I know it is foolish but I feel it to be coming. Then up goes my hand, and I sink. It's coming, captain."

"Stop your noise!" cried Delmont, sternly. "Are you turning coward in your old age, *Le Borgne*? Talk, laugh, keep up your spirits. I tell you we shall not sink. I order you to turn over and swim. Do you hear me?"

The tone of authority of the superior mind was just what was needed to act as a stimulant on Jean Martin's nerves.

He felt ashamed, turned over, and swam on

beside his captain, who said, a moment later, in a tone of quiet triumph:

"There, what did I tell you? I thought it would be here, as soon as we entered the current."

Far ahead of them, as they floated to the top of a swell, they saw a long, black object on the water, looking like a raft of timber.

It vanished the next moment as they sunk in a hollow between the swells, and Martin asked:

"What think you it is, captain?"

"The hulk of the *Muchachito*. The same current that carried it there has borne us along to it, and it is lucky, too."

"Yes, captain; but it looks a long way off still."

"Never mind. So much the better."

"Why, captain?"

"Because the current has carried it out of sight of Jamestown harbor. Had it been seen from the cliffs, it would have been visited long ago by the English."

"Perhaps it has been visited?"

"Perhaps. Indeed, I think it has; but not by the British."

"Why, captain?"

"I see no figures on it against the sky line, and I know some of the crew must have got there."

"Then who has taken them off?"

"The schooner, my friend. I only hope—"

He paused, and Martin asked, as they swam on:

"Hope what, captain?"

"That they have not hunted for the treasure."

"No one knew of it, captain, but you and myself."

"They may have suspected it, and Norton is a shrewd American. He may think it fair salvage, and sail away with it."

Martin groaned as he swam.

"But it would be infamous, captain."

"Never mind. At present we have only to reach the wreck. We are near it now."

In fact, the next wave that lifted them, showed the abandoned hulk of the poor little felucca within fifty feet, and they soon after clambered aboard and sunk down exhausted on her deck.

When they were able to make an examination, the prospect was gloomy enough.

The frigate had passed over the hull of the slightly framed vessel amidships, and had cut it nearly in half.

A portion of the fore-castle, with the wreck of mast and sail, just showed above the water, the waves washing over it, and the quarter-deck had some ten or twelve inches elevation, showing that it was the lightest part of the yacht.

Delmont had expected she would float, being very lightly laden, with no guns on board and large air spaces in the after hold, but he was not prepared for the very low level at which the stern was sunk.

The deck was actually under water, the low bulwarks showing above it, and only the calmness of the sea prevented them being washed away.

After a little time he said to Martin:

"Well, comrade, the treasure is still in the vessel, under the cabin."

"How do you know, captain?"

"If it had been removed, she would float with the deck above water."

"But where are the men?"

"That I do not know. They have been taken off, but whither— Ah, I have it."

"What, captain?"

"The guard-boat was near the wreck. It has taken them off."

"Poor men! They will be shot then?"

"I think not."

"Why not, captain?"

"The British are not all Wrights. They have humanity. Besides, once ashore, they would have to be tried by a court, and even a British court does not shoot men in time of peace."

Martin looked gloomily round.

"Then we are all alone, it seems."

"So it appears; but I do not despair."

Martin sighed.

"What is to become of us? We are alone on a wreck that will not float many hours, and if we are seen from the land it will only be to be taken prisoners."

Delmont turned to him gravely.

"Comrade," he said, three hours ago we were at the mercy of our enemies. An hour ago we were at the mercy of the sea. Now we are at the mercy of the God who made the stars. This is no time to despair. Look out for the schooner. She must be somewhere about the island. I know Norton would not desert us. She may be near us now."

So they strained their eyes over the water, searching for the schooner, to meet only a blank void.

Far away, at one side, lowered the dark mass of St. Helena, where their enemies lay, but the sea appeared to be vacant, and after a long survey even Delmont's voice was gloomy as he said:

"We can only wait, comrade, and trust to the mercy of God."

Then they sat down in the water that washed

the decks of the yacht, and cowered under the shelter of the low bulwarks, for the night breeze chilled their naked bodies, while both men relapsed into gloomy thought.

At last, after a long silence, Delmont said: "This will never do, comrade. I am going to work. I have an idea."

He rose and went forward to the waist, swam across to the fore-castle and rummaged about under the wreck after the sail, till he called out to Martin:

"I have found it."

Martin, whose gloomy temperament had made him indifferent to the other's movements, turned his head.

"What is it?" he asked, listlessly.

"A crowbar. The cabin is full of water, or I should have hesitated. But in the cabin, against the ceiling, is a box of water-proof signals, that can be set off by pulling a string."

Martin started up instantly.

"My captain," he said, humbly, "you are worthy to command us all. I will obey your orders without more grumbling. What must I do?"

"First catch this rope. I can not swim with the crowbar, it is too heavy."

He threw the end of the rope to Martin, and the old sailor hauled in the crowbar, when they set to work to tear open the cabin hatch.

As soon as this was accomplished they found the water up to the cabin ceiling, and Delmont dived down and felt his way to the place where the signal box was stored.

It had been placed there for just such use, and he had no trouble in moving it and attaching a rope to it, when he emerged nearly suffocated, and they hauled the box on deck.

The signals were lights heavily coated with wax, a string left hanging outside, which, when pulled, ignited some composition inside, and set the light going.

In another minute a broad red glare illumined the wreck and the faces of the two men.

Delmont had set the light on the binnacle of the yacht, which was yet standing, and both men peered out into the darkness round them to watch for an answering signal.

"If the schooner is in sight," said Martin, "she will know our light."

But the red glare burned out, and all remained dark as ever.

"Never mind," said Delmont, cheerfully. "Burn another in five minutes. I will not give up hope till the box is empty."

"How many lights are there, captain?"

"There should be twenty-four, but some may miss fire."

"Captain—"

"Well?"

"Suppose they see this from the island?"

"They will come after us in the morning."

"Why not to-night?"

"I have counted on that. The frigate is in the harbor, and the fog thick there. The Andromeda is at least thirty miles off. The only ship we have to fear is the Arethusa, and she may be behind the island. I am going to burn another light."

The string was pulled, and a dazzling white glow followed this time.

No answer came from the sea; but as the light faded, Martin said:

"Look at the island, captain?"

On the top of a peak four points of light were moving in queer angular figures, resting a moment, then resuming their gyrations.

"They are signaling from the telegraph station," said Delmont, quietly. "Well, that is nothing. We shall soon see who they are talking to."

They watched the semaphore lights with such interest that they forgot to let off another fire, till the sound of a gun made them both start.

Out on the water it was difficult to locate the direction of the sound correctly; but Delmont said:

"It comes from behind the island. It must be the Arethusa answering the signal."

Martin, who was staring over the sea to the south, suddenly uttered a cry of joy and clutched his comrade's arm:

"Look, captain!" he cried.

A flash had just lit up the southern horizon, and in a few seconds more the deep boom of a heavy gun came rolling over the water.

Martin and Delmont had been listening for the sound; but the lips of the younger man were moving all the while, and he said quietly:

"It is the schooner; but she is ten miles away, Martin."

"How do you know, captain?"

"By counting the interval between flash and report. She may be a little further off, for I did not catch the first flash."

"And how far off is the frigate?" asked Martin, curiously.

"I cannot tell. I did not see the flash. We must burn another light before she comes from behind the island, or she may see us before the lookout on the schooner."

They did so at once, burning three in rapid succession. Before the glow of the last died out they were answered by a rocket in the south, and Delmont observed:

"They see us at last. We shall be saved."

Martin looked uneasily at the land.

"I wish we knew where the frigate was," he said.

"Watch and we shall see, Martin," was the tranquil answer.

They watched silently for a full hour, when Martin observed:

"I see no lights, and the telegraph station is not working."

"No. They think they have located us, and are waiting for morning to catch us. They imagine this is the schooner."

"Why do you think so, captain?"

"Because no one would imagine that to be the truth which has actually happened. If the guard-boat, as I think, took our men off the wreck, they thought it not worth looking after. Moreover, we have drifted out of the line where they looked for us, and if I mistake not, this current, which you complained of in the water, is yet to prove our salvation. It takes us out of range every time they locate us in the dark. Aha! There they are."

As he spoke, two rockets rose from the sea, one under the island, the other far away to the north.

"The Penelope has come out again," said Delmont. "The other is the Arethusa. I know our rockets. They have colored stars. These are all white."

"Then they are looking for us?"

"Of course. But we have three hours yet before dawn."

"I wish we could see the schooner, captain. She may miss us in the dark."

"Possibly. But I think not. She should be within sight by this time, if she only showed a light. Look sharp for her."

Again they peered out over the ocean, and in a little while more Martin said:

"There she is, passing us."

"Where?"

"Out yonder, toward the Penelope."

Then they saw, stealing through the dark night, about half a mile off, the white sails of the schooner, gliding along in the light breeze, under a cloud of canvas.

"The current has carried us below her estimate," said Delmont. "We must burn another light at any hazard. I think she is nearer than the two ships, and it will not do to be here at daylight."

As he spoke he pulled another string, and immediately tossed the light into the sea, where it expired with a hiss.

"She sees us," cried Martin, joyfully. In fact, the schooner immediately fell off before the wind, and came down on them, wing and wing, close enough to be hailed, when a voice shouted:

"Who are you? Speak quick!"

"Schooner ahoy," cried Delmont. "Is it the Belle of Baltimore?"

"Ay, ay," answered the voice, "is it you, Delmont? Where the dickens are you? Where's the felucca?"

"Here!" cried Delmont. "Don't you see us, *mon ami*?"

"Port hard!" cried the voice. "Trim in the sheets! Steady!"

And the schooner shaved so close to the wreck in the darkness that Delmont and Martin both expected to be run down. When she had passed she luffed up, and a boat pulled to the wreck, when a man in the stern-sheets stood up, saying:

"No wonder I couldn't see you. Why didn't you say you'd been wrecked? How did this happen, Delmont?"

Delmont grasped the hand of his American friend, and got on board the boat before he answered:

"It's a long story. The Penelope sunk us, and some of the men are prisoners, others dead. Martin and I are here. Did you see the two frigates signaling?"

"Ay, ay," returned Norton, carelessly. "I don't fear those old tubs in broad daylight. But we must get the men back in some way. Come aboard and get some clothes, before we do anything. I can't promise you such fine toggery as you used to sport on the felucca; but if plain blue flannel is not too coarse, you shall have a hearty welcome."

"Stay," interposed Delmont. "How far off are the frigates, think you?"

"The nearest is five miles, the other at least eight, I think, but won't be sure in the dark."

"How long before they can get here?"

"Depends on the wind. They don't make two knots an hour now. It's only the Belle that can make six in this sort of weather."

"Captain Norton," said Delmont, in French, so as not to be understood by the American boats' crew. "In the wreck, under the cabin floor, lies a large chest. In that chest are over a million dollars in gold and jewels, besides some papers. Help me get them out before the frigates come and I'll give you half for the Belle of Baltimore, to take my revenge in. Do you accept the offer?"

Norton burst out laughing.

"Accept the offer? Why man, what do you take me for? I was born in the State of South Carolina, and I never went back on a friend

yet. I'll help get your money; but when Rutledge Norton sells his friendship I'll take your offer."

Delmont grasped his hand warmly.

"You are worthy to belong to the Old Guard," was all he answered.

CHAPTER XXI.

TURNING THE TABLES.

MORNING dawned over the sea round St. Helena, and the sun shone on three vessels, forming a triangle, of which each side was about five miles, while the sea heaved gently in a dead calm.

The schooner, Belle of Baltimore, heeled over from the wreck of the yacht, to which she was attached by heavy hawsers, lay about eight miles from the island, her crew working rapidly at the wreck, which had risen two or three feet from the water, and transferring boxes and bales from her to the schooner through a large hole cut in the deck.

The Penelope lay under the land, the Arethusa off to the north, and all three vessels lay with flapping canvas, slowly drifting on a sluggish current.

Rutledge Norton, captain of the Belle, a thin, sunburnt young man, with a blue eye and fair hair, was giving orders in a sharp, energetic way, while Delmont stood by him, gloomily eying the island, which contained his idol.

As for Martin, the old sailor was hard at work diving into the cabin, attaching ropes and helping generally.

As the sun rose, Delmont said to Norton:

"My friend, I am very grateful to you for this service. You came here merely as a spectator. I had no right to ask you to share my risks—"

Rutledge interrupted him with a laugh.

"Nonsense, man. Stop it. I've a grudge of my own to settle with these fellows."

"What fellows?"

"These Britishers. My grandfather died in a British prison, and I was at school in the last war, so I had no chance to get even then. This is what I've been looking for ever since I came to sea."

"I don't understand you."

"A chance to fight a Britisher in a good cause. I'm going to get your men off that island."

Delmont's face brightened.

"But how? They are in British hands. We can't attack the island."

"No, but we can the ships."

"And do you really mean—"

"I really do. Pshaw! It's easy."

"My friend," said Delmont, gravely. "This is not your place. I, desperate, caring not for life, could afford to run risks, but you have a home and country to live for. You are not an exile."

Rutledge pushed him gently away.

"Attend to unloading your old hooker," he said. "I'll attend to the Belle."

"But at least tell me what you're going to do, Norton."

"Certainly. In fact, I shall need your help. You are, I understand, an expert artilleryman. I'm a pretty good shot myself, but I don't calculate my range well. You have some means—"

"Yes, yes, I understand. I use triangulation with compasses or sextants from the deck and the top of the mast."

"Exactly. Well, I don't understand it, though I can work my altitudes respectably for finding my place on a chart. I am going to fight those ships, or whichever dares to follow me. My long gun will outshoot theirs a quarter of a mile; but I can't afford to waste shots. I've only a hundred rounds on the Belle."

"What do you want me to do, then?"

"To find the ranges for me. Your man Martin, can he point a gun?"

"He is a better shot than I."

"Very well. I'll attend to the Belle, and you two shall attend to the gun. As soon as the wind springs up, we'll begin; and before three days are out I'll have your men aboard the Belle of Baltimore."

So saying, he returned to his work and remained at it till the lookout cried:

"Wind coming from the south, sir, in a squall."

This put St. Helena on a lee-shore, but gave the Belle the weather gage of her foes.

Delmont, more anxious for his friend than himself, said hurriedly:

"Let us cast off the hawsers and trim the schooner, Norton. If the squall comes on us in this guise, we may suffer damage."

Norton glanced south, where a dark cloud was approaching, with black water under its shadow.

"We've time to get some more things," he said, carelessly. "I'll take care of the Belle. Heave the gun over amidships, boys, and get her trimmed, but go on working."

The huge forty-two-pounder was dragged amidships, and the little vessel stood up in the water, the hawsers slackening that held her to the wreck.

The hulk of the yacht settled a foot into the

water, where it floated alone, and the crew of the Belle set to work to reduce their canvas to a jib and close-reefed mainsail, to meet the coming squall.

The wreckers worked till the breeze ahead of the squall began to sigh in the rigging, when they cast off the hawsers, scrambled aboard, and the Belle of Baltimore fell off and began to rush through the waters at race-horse speed.

The squall was fierce and drove them along at sixteen knots an hour, so that it was not long before they went racing past the Arethusa, which was lying to on the east of the island.

The frigate, as they passed, fired a gun to windward and showed a signal, to which Norton replied by setting the American flag as he raced away to the north.

Inside of an hour the squall had turned into a steady breeze, and they saw the Penelope and Arethusa join company to windward and come after the Belle under a press of sail.

"Now," said Rutledge Norton, coolly, "I've got them where I want them. The fellow with the stumpy foremast has had one taste of the old forty-two already. I fancy I'll make him sick before he sees Jamestown again."

The two ships came on, and the Belle, remaining under small canvas, was being steadily overhauled, when Norton asked Delmont:

"I wonder why the Arethusa didn't chase us till the other fellow came up?"

Delmont explained: "She's been out of the fight, and didn't know us. Besides, the man who commands the other ship has a personal spite against the emperor and all us French, and he'll follow wherever he sees a ghost of a chance."

Rutledge laughed again. "He will, will he? Then he'll be the sickest Briton I ever knew before I've done with him. Aloft there! Get the main-topsail loose. Shake out the reefs, boys. I want to get a good fifty miles from St. Helena before I begin."

They hoisted the foresail and began to move more rapidly, till Norton said:

"We're holding our own now. I want to separate those fellows. The Arethusa seems to be waiting for the other. They don't think the odds enough, without two frigates to a Yankee schooner."

On they sailed, hour after hour, till the island of St. Helena had vanished, and the ocean was solitary around them.

Then Norton noticed that the Arethusa had drawn nearly a mile ahead of her consort, and was within five miles of the Belle.

At this juncture he ordered the main-topsail taken in, and allowed the frigate to overhaul him slowly.

"Now," he said to Delmont, "it is time we began work. Get your range, and as soon as you can hit his foremast let him have it."

Delmont called for Martin, who came up full of eagerness, and took his post at the gun.

The one-eyed cannoneer was in his element at last.

"Now, my captain," he said, patting the breech of the gun affectionately, "I have something I can depend on. No rockets here. Where shall I hit the gentleman?"

"I want to cripple him, Monsieur Martin," said Norton, politely, "so that the other gentleman may have a chance to come on alone."

"In that case, monsieur," returned Martin, with equal politeness, "it will only be necessary to strike his foremast down by the deck. That will stop his racing."

"Do you think you can do it?"

"It depends on the captain, monsieur—I mean Monsieur Delmont."

"I thought you were to fire."

"So I am, monsieur, and to point, too."

"Then why has the captain anything to do with your shot?"

"He has to tell me when to fire and at what elevation to point."

Delmont had gone up to the mast-head in the mean time, and was taking the angle of the distant vessel.

"What height is this mast?" he called down.

"Seventy-five feet," answered Norton.

"Then we are a hundred yards out of range. Give her four degrees elevation, Martin, and wait."

The schooner sailed on, and presently the young Frenchman cried:

"Aim at the top of the bowsprit! Fire!"

The big gun roared, and they watched the shot, a little black spot in the air, till they saw the splinters fly from the bows of the Arethusa, and Delmont shouted down:

"Too low. You hit her, but not in the right place. Try again, Jean."

Again the gun was loaded, but this time the Arethusa yawed and let fly a broadside of twenty-four-pound shot, which all fell short.

The second shot of the schooner struck in the same place as the first, and Delmont shouted angrily:

"What are you about? Missed again?"

Jean Martin wiped his face and looked vexed.

"I don't see how it is," he began, when a shout from the crew interrupted him.

The foremast of the Arethusa came toppling over into the sea, and the ship at once broached-to, and lay on the sea a wreck, her main-top-

mast having been dragged over by the fall of the other mast.

Then One Eye, the Cannoneer, patted his gun proudly, murmuring:

"Did they abuse you, my child? I knew that we couldn't miss twice!"

Rutledge Norton came up and slapped him on the back.

"By Jove, Martin," he said, "you shoot as if you had served in the Constitution. I couldn't have done better myself."

"You forget, monsieur, that you did the same yesterday, to the Penelope," said the one-eyed cannoneer, modestly.

"Ah, that was a chance shot. It surprised me more than the enemy, perhaps. But you meant both your shots."

The Belle sailed on now so fast that her commander threw her up into the wind to wait for the Penelope, the Arethusa being out of the fight.

They saw Wright's frigate come up to the Arethusa, pass by, and crowd all sail in pursuit, not deigning to notice her consort.

"That fellow has grit, at all events," was Norton's remark, surveying the frigate. "He knows his danger, and comes on. Give him a chance, boys. He shall have all the fight he wants. Up helm, and let her go through the water now."

The Belle paid off and skimmed away, the Penelope in hot pursuit, till she had drawn within gun-shot of her twenty-fours, and let fly a full broadside.

The shot came skipping over the sea and one of them struck the bends of the schooner, but dropped off, spent.

"Give her the main-topsail, boys," cried Rutledge, with a defiant laugh. "That big villain will knock all our paint off."

The topsail was set, and the next broadside failed to reach the Belle.

"Now," cried Delmont from the mast-head; "two degrees and a half elevation. Aim where you please."

Martin eyed the frigate coolly.

"She's not far enough yet from the other," he remarked, "to make it worth while to poke at her spurs. I think I'd better sink her, captain."

"Sink her!" said Rutledge, incredulously. "But that is a cut above even your skill, my friend."

"Monsieur shall see," returned Martin. "My life against the emperor's safety, this shot shall sink her."

"Or at least," he added, as he touched the priming, "start a leak they can't stop."

The great gun boomed, and the missile hummed away on its flight.

The Penelope was coming bows on, far ahead of her consort, and the shot struck somewhere in the bow, raising a great cloud of spray.

"*H la! capitaine!*" cried Jean, anxiously, looking up at the mast-head. "What have I done this time?"

Delmont was gazing fixedly through the glass, and he said nothing for some time. At last he shut up the glass, came down the rigging, and offered his hand to the one-eyed cannoneer.

"Comrade," he said, "you have knocked a hole in the frigate's bows that will sink her."

"Impossible!" cried Rutledge. "Give me the glass!"

But the glass was not needed. They saw the Penelope heave to, set her flag, union down, in the mizzen rigging, while she was distinctly settling by the head, and her boats were being lowered on all sides.

"It is actually true," said Rutledge, after a long look through the glass. "Mr. Jean Martin, you are the king of all cannoneers in the world."

And he took off his hat ceremoniously to Martin, who blushed up to the eyes, while the crew cheered him vehemently.

"Now," observed Norton, "I think we have turned the tables on our friend yonder, and now, Delmont, you will see what I meant when I said we would have your men back from St. Helena in three days."

Delmont brightened up.

"I see. You mean—?"

"To take all those boats, before they can get to the Arethusa and make hostages of them. That's fair, isn't it?"

"We shall not have long to wait," the Frenchman returned. "I think the ship is going down now."

In fact, not ten minutes after the lucky shot of the one-eyed cannoneer, the ill-fated Penelope took a plunge, and went down, head-foremost, leaving a cluster of boats on the sea, pulling away to windward.

"Now," shouted Rutledge, "pile on the kites, boys. Clear away those top-sails. Set flying jib and staysails. Give her all she can carry and lay her for those boats."

With hearty cheers the Americans sprung to their work, and the Belle rushed through the water for the little fleet of boats, to cut them off from the Arethusa.

The disabled frigate was about four miles to windward, but the boats had the advantage of

being able to pull in the wind's eye, while the schooner had to beat up to intercept them.

The race was hot and exciting, but at last Norton cried:

"Next board, and we have them. Get the small-arms ready, in case they show fight. I don't want to sink them all."

The schooner rushed through the sea, and, as the captain had foreseen, her next tack brought her to windward of the boats, into the midst of which she rushed, her captain shouting:

"It's no use, boys, I don't want to hurt you, but if you don't surrender, I'll sink every mother's son of you."

"Fire on the infamous pirate," roared Wright fiercely, from the stern of one of the boats, which they could now see were heavily armed.

"Close in and board, men. Close in!"

And the boats, with their crews giving a regular British cheer, dashed at the schooner like so many dogs at a bull.

Had the weather been calm, there is no doubt they would have carried her; for they had three hundred men crowded into eleven boats, including a huge launch, that pulled twenty oars of a side and carried a twenty-four pound carronade on the bow, while the crew of the schooner was less than forty all told.

But Norton had not made his swoop without counting the cost, and before a boat could hook on, he was sweeping through them at a speed that made them all back out of the way, and ran right over the launch, in the stern of which Wright was standing, cutting the boat down and swamping it.

Then, making a rapid board to windward, he came down on them again, as if determined to exterminate every one, when an officer in one of the boats waved a white flag and cried:

"That's enough. We surrender!"

"Who are you?" cried Norton.

"Lieutenant Chumley, in command. The first lieutenant was killed by your shot, and the captain's drowned, I fear."

"Throw your arms into the sea every one of you," answered Norton, "or I fire into you. Then come aboard, a boat-load at a time. I know your ship of old. We've not forgotten your cowardly trick with the Belle Creole."

He had heard the story from Delmont, and used it with good effect now.

The sailors, disheartened by the loss of the launch, obeyed the orders of their officers, and cast their weapons in the sea, when they were allowed to come on board the schooner, one at a time, and sent down into the hold till Delmont observed:

"Excuse me, captain, but I have a better plan than that."

"What is it?" asked Rutledge, who was beginning to look worried and a little anxious at the numbers of his prisoners.

"These men may try to rise on us."

"I know it."

"Why not put them back in the boats and tow them?"

"A good idea."

So the exodus was stopped, and the men who were on board were told to go back to their boats, which they gladly did, shouting and singing.

They began to think the Americans were afraid of them, and about to let them go. They were only undeceived when they found that the boats had been stripped of oars and everything else, and that they were towed astern in a helpless state that caused loud curses at the smartness of the Yankee.

This was lightened when Norton, taking a swift boat of his own, rowed round the fleet with Delmont, inspecting it closely, while four sailors, with two loaded rifles lying by each, watched every movement of the men.

When they had concluded the inspection, Martin said inquiringly:

"Well?"

"Well, it is as I thought," said Delmont distinctly, in English, "the captain has turned craven, and is trying another pirate's trick. He is not drowned. He is there in the pinnace."

And sure enough "Old Crabs" was fished out from under a thwart, all his ferocity gone, for he was very pale as he said:

"I suppose—you mean—to—murder me."

"By no means," said Norton politely. "In fact, we mean to treat you better than you would have treated us. You would have hanged us. We are going to take you and all your officers on board the schooner, on your parole not to escape. You will be held as hostages for the return of our men held in prison at St. Helena. Come on board, captain."

And Wright, trying hard to preserve his dignity, was taken on board the schooner together with all the officers of the Penelope, when the Belle of Baltimore set sail for St. Helena, towing her long string of boats.

When they came within long gun-shot of the Arethusa, Norton set the boats loose to drift, saying:

"If your friends yonder want to save you, they can do it. I don't want you."

Then as they trimmed sheets for the island, he said to Delmont:

"The officers' lives have value in England. Sailors they would let go without a thought."

CHAPTER XXII.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

The schooner laid her course for St. Helena pretty early in the afternoon, but the wind being dead in her teeth and the island sixty miles and more away, she was compelled to beat up—that is, to sail about four times the distance to reach her destination.

Consequently, evening found her still to leeward of the shore, and it was judged best to make a long stretch to the east before morning to be out of the way of the *Andromeda*, which had lately been added to the station and might have come back to look for them.

The officers of the *Penelope* behaved well in their captivity, all but Wright, who maintained a surly and unsocial demeanor, refusing to be conciliated by the kindness shown him, in common with the rest.

Tom Chumley and the others were much impressed by the frank hospitality with which they were treated, and Tom went so far as to say to Norton:

"Mr. Norton, I was a midshipman on the *Java*, when your *Constitution* picked us to pieces, and I've hated your nation ever since; but by Jove, sir, I'll say this:—If I were not an Englishman, I should be proud to be an American, and I'll never stand by again and hear a word against America. You've trusted to our honor, and given us free run of your vessel, when we might rise and overpower you at any time, and I feel the confidence, sir, I feel it."

Delmont, who heard this, was watching Wright, and saw the captain start and look round when Chumley adverted to a possible rising.

They were at dinner in the cabin, which was crowded with English officers, and he and Norton were alone in the midst of them.

Norton laughed good-humoredly when the other finished.

"I'll acknowledge," he said, "that I've trusted to your honor, but I'm not in your power so much as you think."

"Why not?" suddenly asked the harsh voice of the British captain.

Norton looked at him sternly.

"Because," he said, "any man that would violate his parole among you would commit an act for which I should hold him personally responsible."

Wright laughed sarcastically.

"Ah, you mean you'd call him out?"

"I mean no such thing, sir."

"What then, sir?"

"I mean that he would cease to be an officer and a gentleman, and I should hang him," said Norton quietly.

Wright sneered openly.

"But suppose you were in his power, and he thought it his duty to his own sovereign to exercise the power?"

The cabin full of officers had become quite silent now. They saw, from the manner of Wright, that something was impending, and wondered what it was.

Norton's face flushed slightly.

"Not recognizing allegiance to any sovereign sir, I cannot appreciate the force of any such supposition. In my country we hold that the people who inhabit it are the only sovereigns, and that the greatest good of the greatest number is the only foundation of good government."

Wright slapped the table exultantly.

"I have you in your own trap, sir. We are more numerous than you, here; for we are at least ten to one in this cabin. Our interests call for the capture of this schooner in his majesty's service. Now, what have you to say?"

Norton looked round him, coolly.

"Simply that the subject is getting too personal, Captain Wright. I request that you will drop it."

"And suppose I refuse, sir?" asked the Englishman edging closer.

"In that case I should cease to think it a jest and put you in irons, sir," was the quiet reply, as Norton turned in his chair and looked Wright in the eye.

One or two of the English officers rose and cries were heard.

"Captain, captain, for God's sake—"

Wright returned Norton's glance with interest, and spoke slowly and distinctly:

"Look you, Mr. Norton, or whatever your name may be—"

"Norton is the correct name," interrupted the other, smilingly, but with a dangerous glitter in his eye. "Treat it with respect, sir, while you sit at my table, and do not force me to forget you are my guest, as well as my prisoner."

A murmur of approval went round, and the faces of the British officers showed that they were disgusted with the way in which their captain spoke.

Even Wright colored slightly; but went on with increasing bitterness.

"Very well then, I will speak plainly, and abide the issue. In the first place, sir, by the laws of war, you are a pirate. You have fired on a ship-of-war belonging to a friendly power—"

"Not till you fired first on me," was Norton's

composed reply. "This schooner has American papers, and is authorized to defend herself from search. But let it pass. Go on, sir."

"By the laws of war, you are a pirate, with whom no man is bound to keep faith," continued Wright grimly, "and you have been fool enough to let fifty-two officers and warrant officers of my ship aboard your schooner. It is true we are unarmed, but your men are scattered, some asleep in the fore-castle, and we are ten to one in this cabin, with the arm-rack, full of weapons, right over your head. Now—"

"Stop!" suddenly cried Norton, putting out his hand. "I know what you are going to say, but don't say it. If you proceed to act on your threats, I warn you I will hang you."

And yet he made no movement, even to rise from his chair.

Wright, for one moment, was staggered by his assurance; but then, looking round and seeing every eye fixed on him, as if watching whether he would dare go any further, he rose up, saying:

"Very well. Gentlemen of the *Penelope*, I order you in the king's name to rise and seize those arms. Mr. Norton, you are my prisoner. Secure that Frenchman and kill him if he stirs."

There was a confusion instantly. A few officers cried: "Shame!" but the majority rose and made a rush to the arms-rack, while Wright seized the young American by the collar and repeated furiously:

"You are my prisoner. Now, what do you say to that, sir?"

Norton looked up as coolly as ever, and Delmont did not stir.

In quiet tones, which caused the officers to keep silence in very curiosity to hear what the American would say, he observed:

"Well, if I am, there's no need to put on such tragic airs, captain, nor to spoil my shirt collar. I've not moved yet that I am aware."

The response was so cool that more than one officer tittered, and Wright looked puzzled and relaxed his grasp.

"Well," he said, reluctantly, "you're a cool hand, I'll admit."

"Thank you," was the unruffled return.

"Now that this jest is played out, captain, I recommend you to take your seat, and take a glass of wine to drown your mortification. And I hope those gentlemen who are making so free with my property, will put back those edged tools in the rack. You can't take the *Belle*, gentlemen."

He uttered the last words so scornfully that Wright answered, angrily:

"Why not? Come, why not?"

"Because," said Norton, calmly, "while you were vamping, I was acting. I have sounded an alarm, and if you will look up at that skylight you will see you are in my power—not I in yours by any means."

Wright looked up, and, as he did so, Norton suddenly rose and stamped his foot on the floor, close to the leg of the table.

In a moment they heard the loud report of an explosion somewhere forward in the schooner's hull, and the noise was followed by a rushing of feet on deck, and savage cries of:

"Get down, curse you!"

"You would, would you?"

"Kill every Johnny Bull in the crowd."

The cries were accompanied by the sound of blows, in the midst of which a dozen muskets were pointed down the cabin skylight, and a voice cried:

"Where's the captain?"

"Here!"

It was the ringing voice of Norton, who added in the same tones:

"Avast there! No harm done yet. Only an accident. I trod on the torpedo trigger without meaning it."

The British officers, paralyzed by the racket round them, stood irresolute when Delmont rose up.

"Put de arms back in de rack!" he cried, sharply. "Did you hear de order of Monsieur Norton?"

The men at the skylight peered down in amazement, keeping their muskets leveled, and the entrapped officers, in ludicrous hurry, restored the arms to the racks, while Wright, the picture of shame and rage, stood, white as ashes, glaring at Norton.

Chumley and three other officers had not risen during the whole fracas. Norton looked round the cabin.

"Gentlemen will take their seats," he said, in the calmest of voices.

They obeyed like lambs, all but Wright, who folded his arms, smiling bitterly. Then the American said to Delmont:

"My friend, oblige me by calming the excitement; see that the rest of the prisoners are put in the hold, and come back."

Delmont bowed silently and left the cabin to go on deck.

He found the Americans, all around in boarders' guise, patrolling the deck, with not an Englishman visible, and one of them, in answer to his query, said:

"The torpedo skeered them worse'n pizen, sir. They didn't show a mite of fight. We druv 'em into the hold like so many sheep, and

Seth Folger and Dan Macy's a puttin' on the irons now. What's be'n the matter?"

"Nothing. Only a mistake," said Delmont, evasively. "Go to your duties, boys. The captain will be up presently."

When he got back to the cabin he heard the voice of Norton, speaking in low, measured tones, while the officers were listening silently, looking as heartily ashamed of themselves as men could well be.

"I treated you," Norton was saying, "as gentlemen in misfortune. I trusted that British officers were all gentlemen. I took your parole. I gave you the freedom of my schooner. I thought that men like you would have more regard for your honor than the paltry advantage to be gained by forfeiting it. You see that you were in my power all the time. I tried you, to find out whether you were or were not gentlemen. I find exactly four among you. I shall be just to them. Mr. Chumley, please rise."

Tom rose up, very pale.

"You and the three gentlemen who did not assist in this rising are free to depart. I shall request you to act as my envoys to St. Helena. I have kept one of your boats—the pinnace—and I shall put you into her forthwith. You will proceed to Jamestown and inform Sir Hudson Lowe that if the boat in which you go to Jamestown is not returned with all the French sailors taken from the wreck of the yacht *Muchachito*, by sunset to-morrow I shall take your officers and hang them."

Chumley shuddered.

"You would not do such a thing as that. It would be savage, inhuman."

"Had your ship taken our schooner, where should we be now, sir? You know well enough. I treat as I am treated. Do you refuse my mission?"

"I do not understand your alternative, sir. If the French prisoners come back, what then?"

"In that case I shall send you all off in the same boat."

"But it will not hold us all."

"It can make two trips, sir. But tell Sir Hudson, that the first sign I see of treachery, Captain Wright swings at the yard-arm, and all your officers, who have forfeited their lives by this attempt at rising, bear him company. Tell him I'm in earnest, sir, and remember that on your mission hang the lives of your friends."

Then he looked up to the skylight.

"Four men down here to secure prisoners. The rest cover them with your muskets. If a man resists, open fire and kill them all."

His tones were sharp and menacing, and he turned and beckoned to Chumley and his three friends.

They went on deck and when he was there he shook hands with Delmont very warmly.

"You're the coolest Frenchman I ever saw. You let me run the whole machine without a jar and you knew nothing of the torpedo. I thank you heartily."

Ten minutes later, in the dusk of the evening, the pinnace of the sunken frigate, with a lug sail set and four officers aboard, left the side of the schooner and stretched out for the island of St. Helena, while the British officers, ironed like felons, were sent into the forward hold with a strong guard over them, and a lantern hung from the open hatch above them to expose every movement.

"They thought they'd caught us napping," remarked Norton, as he paced the deck with his friend, "but it takes three Englishmen to outwit one Yankee in a trick. Now they can sweat for it."

"And what are you going to do with Wright?" asked Delmont. "I see he is locked up in a state-room."

"Keep him till the last, my friend. I know these cusses. It's too much to expect fair play from them when they know they could blow the *Belle* out of the water if they could once get within range. We're not out of the woods yet."

Then the *Belle* stretched away to the east under a press of sail, and in the morning was out of sight of the island on an open empty sea.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END OF ALL.

At sunset of the next day the *Belle* of Baltimore came sailing down in front of Jamestown, after a circuit of the island, in which, to the surprise of her commander and Delmont, not a single man-of-war had been sighted.

As they drew near the harbor they could see, however, that all the frigates that had been on guard duty, save the sunken *Penelope*, were lying at their anchors, their yards stripped as if for a prolonged stay, their upper gear down on deck.

They stood on, more and more curious, suspecting a trap of some sort, but not knowing what it could be, till Delmont, who had been watching closely, said:

"What is the matter? No flags are to be seen."

"It's near sunset," observed Norton. "They may have taken them in. But I think they see us. The semaphores are waving their arms, signaling."

They stood on till within long gun-shot of the harbor, the telegraph stations working as before, till the flash of a gun from the citadel was followed by a dull booming report, and Norton remarked quickly:

"That gun was not shot. What does it mean?"

Delmont made no answer, but kept the glass at his eye.

When he took it down his face was pale and his voice husky as he said:

"They have hoisted all the flags. Look."

He turned away, went and sat down on the rail, and beckoned to Jean Martin, who came up looking half frightened at his comrade's face.

Norton looked earnestly at the island, shifting his glass from place to place, and at last turned round.

"All the flags are at half-mast," he said. "Some one is dead."

Then he looked at the two Frenchmen, and lo! tears were trickling down the rugged cheeks of Jean Martin.

The one-eyed cannoneer was weeping.

Delmont rose and came to his friend Norton and said quietly:

"My friend, our task is over. The emperor is dead. Hark!"

As he spoke, the ships in the harbor and the forts began to fire minute guns, and the arms of the semaphores rested.

They had told their message.

The first man of his age had died in exile on the rock of St. Helena.

So impressed were all by the news, that they hardly noticed the approach of the Penelope's pinnace, loaded with men, till the look out announced it, and added:

"There's another boat coming, sir, with some English officers and a white flag in the stern."

Then they saw that the pinnace was full of wrecked Muchachitos, and—more wonderful still—that she carried a small tri-colored flag in her stern.

"It is true," ejaculated Norton, much affected at the sight. "I do believe, boys, that they're going to bury old grudges in the grave of Napoleon. If so, it shall not be said I stood in the way."

The boats came alongside, and a British officer with a white flag came aboard.

With a grave bow, he said:

"I am Captain Gervaise, of the governor's staff. He desires me to say that he has no claim on these men, since the death of our late prisoner, General Bonaparte, and that you are welcome to enter the harbor. He pledges his honor that no injury shall be done you or yours, but that you shall be freely allowed to participate in the obsequies of the late general, who died at the moment the first gun was fired."

Norton bowed before him rather coldly.

"Thanks for your courtesy, sir. I will not trespass on it. We have had in this ship but a poor experience of British honor, and his late majesty, the Emperor Napoleon, had still less cause to trust to it. But I have some of your officers prisoners. If you will take them I shall be glad to get rid of them."

Gervaise drew himself up haughtily.

"I will take charge of them, sir, if I can signal for boats to take them all."

"You can have mine, sir. I'll see if you take them before I trust my schooner in your harbor."

And for the next twenty minutes the schooner was a scene of bustle and confusion, as the released officers went over the side and the French sailors came aboard.

When the exchange was effected, Gervaise bowed stiffly, and was going to his boat, when Delmont touched his arm.

"Can I go to the funeral?" he asked in French. "It was I who stunned you the other night, and would have taken the emperor had he been capable of movement. On the honor of a soldier, sir, can I attend the funeral?"

Gervaise looked at him steadily for some time before he answered, very emphatically and gravely:

"Monsieur, if you are the gentleman that planned that surprise, you are a soldier it is an honor to know. I pledge you my life and honor to hold you safely from harm, and permit your return to your friends. My duty is over. I can afford now to be a gentleman as well as an officer."

Delmont put out his hand.

"*Touchez la, monsieur,*" he said. "I never thought to say as much to an Englishman. I will go with you."

Then he turned to Norton.

"Will you wait for me till to-morrow at sunset, my friend?"

"Certainly. Till you come. But I warn you not to trust these English."

"I must, this once, my friend. I will come back to-morrow."

Then he went over the side with Martin and Gervaise, and the two men who had fought each other so long, sailed to St. Helena side by side.

In the lonely valley of Longwood, where so much of our story passed, rose a green mound,

shaded by weeping willows, twenty years after the funeral of the great Napoleon.

An old man, whose long hair and beard were white as the drifted snow, whose form was bent with age, his left eye covered with a black patch, was carefully picking the dead leaves off some roses, planted on the mound, when he heard the echoes of guns pealing up the long gorge.

He looked up peevishly and muttered in French:

"Can they not be quiet to-day of all days—the fifth of May, when he died? And these roses, they sicken in this torrid climate, and I cannot find a single violet in all the island."

The sound of the guns went on, and presently he muttered:

"It is a salute. I have not heard one for twenty years now. I wonder where they have all gone now. The captain, so young and brave. Poor boy! How he grieved for the emperor. And the American, too. Where are they all? Twenty years is a long time. They must be both past forty, and poor old Jean Martin is nearly eighty now. Nearly eighty! Ah, who will tend these flowers when I am gone?"

He heard steps behind him and saw two gentlemen, dark and bearded, looking at him curiously.

One of them said, in a low voice:

"It is he, Norton. How glad he will be."

Then he came up, asking in French:

"My friend, do you not know me?"

The old man looked puzzled.

"Pardon, monsieur, but my poor old one eye is nearly worked out now. Once I could use it—"

"Ay, even to sink a frigate," said the other, smiling. "Jean Martin, is it possible you do not know Delmont? It is actually I, my friend, and here is our old friend Norton."

The old man allowed a spasm of joy to cross his face, and he took off his faded old cap, saying:

"God bless you both, messieurs. I am glad you came before I was gone. Oh, messieurs, can you not see, after I am dead, some one is paid to keep this place in order? These English, what do they care for the feelings of our hearts? But Frenchmen should respect the great Napoleon."

"Jean Martin," returned Delmont, slowly, "do you remember the words written by the emperor in his will?"

The old man's face saddened.

"Ah, too well, monsieur. They were—"

"It is my wish that my ashes may repose on the banks of the Seine, among the French people I have loved so well." But that will never be, monsieur. The English will not let him go."

"Jean Martin," said the other, solemnly, "prepare yourself. The English have consented, and two of our own ships, flying the tricolor, are in the harbor to execute the will of the French nation. The coffin will be taken to France to-morrow."

Somewhat to his surprise, the old man made no sign of joy, but on the contrary turned round trembling:

"Oh, monsieur," he stammered, "don't take it away till I am dead. It is all I have to live for, to tend these flowers for him."

Delmont laid his hand on the other's shoulder, his eyes full of tears:

"Jean, old comrade, do you think France would part with you? No, no, my old friend, you are to go with him, and be the custodian of his tomb. You have been with him in sorrow. Now you shall share his glory."

Under the dome of The Invalides of Paris stands the simple but dignified monument of France's greatest warrior, and here again, ten years later, the figure of old Jean Martin, the one-eyed cannoneer, might be seen by any visitor who visited that famous tomb.

In the simple costume of the Invalid Corps of France, the old man was wont to sit in his arm-chair, telling, in a thin, piping voice, to curious visitors, stories of the Grand Army, of which he was one of the few living remnants.

He lived to see the eagles of the Second Empire perched in glory once more in his own beloved Paris, and he died at last, at the age of ninety-four, on the day that the Treaty of Paris was signed with Russia, when England and France fought side by side in the Crimea.

The *entente cordiale* used to puzzle the old soldier; and, only a few days before his death, he said to his old friend, Admiral Delmont, of the Imperial Navy:

"Ah, monsieur, I suppose it is all right, this friendship, but as for me, I can never forget the rock of St. Helena, and I cannot bring my heart to love a Briton."

He died kissing his faded cross of the Legion of Honor, telling the priest—who was scandalized—with a faint shadow of his former grim humor:

"I go—to meet—him; he will know me by this cross."

Thus Jean Martin died, as he had lived, a simple, honest hero worshiper. He had devoted all his life to advance the glory of one man,

whom he adored, and he died in the belief that the glory would endure forever.

Happy Jean Martin! He died before the shadow of Sedan had fallen on the dome of The Invalides, while yet the name of Napoleon was a spell in France.

That the spell fails now is no shame to the man that wove it.

Julius made the name of *Cæsar* a power. Even Nero could not degrade it.

THE END.

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